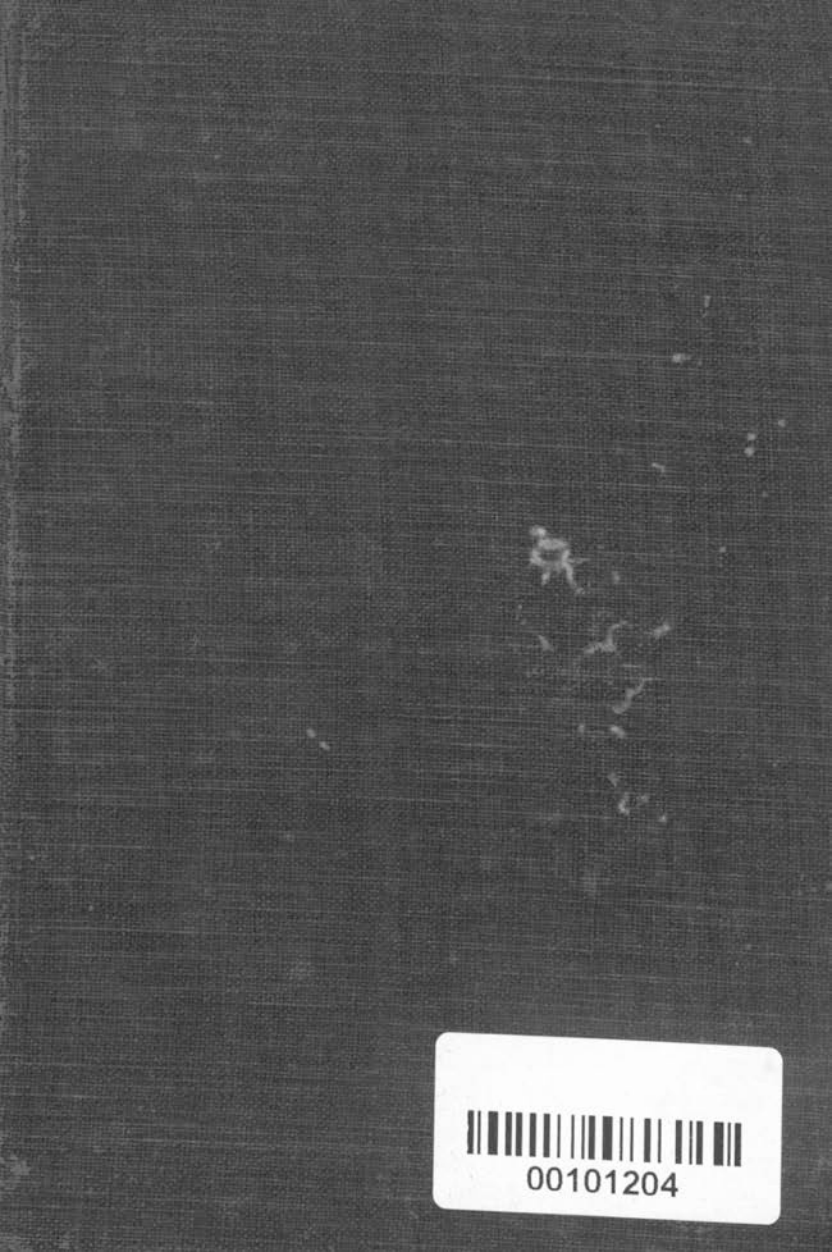

00101204

Digitized with financial assistance from

H T Parekh FOUNDATION

An Initiative by HDFC WITH YOU, RIGHT THROUGH

on 15 October, 2018

THE HAUNTED SEVENTH

THE HAUNTED SEVENTH

BY
MAJOR-GENERAL CHARLES ROSS,
C.B., D.S.O.

B354

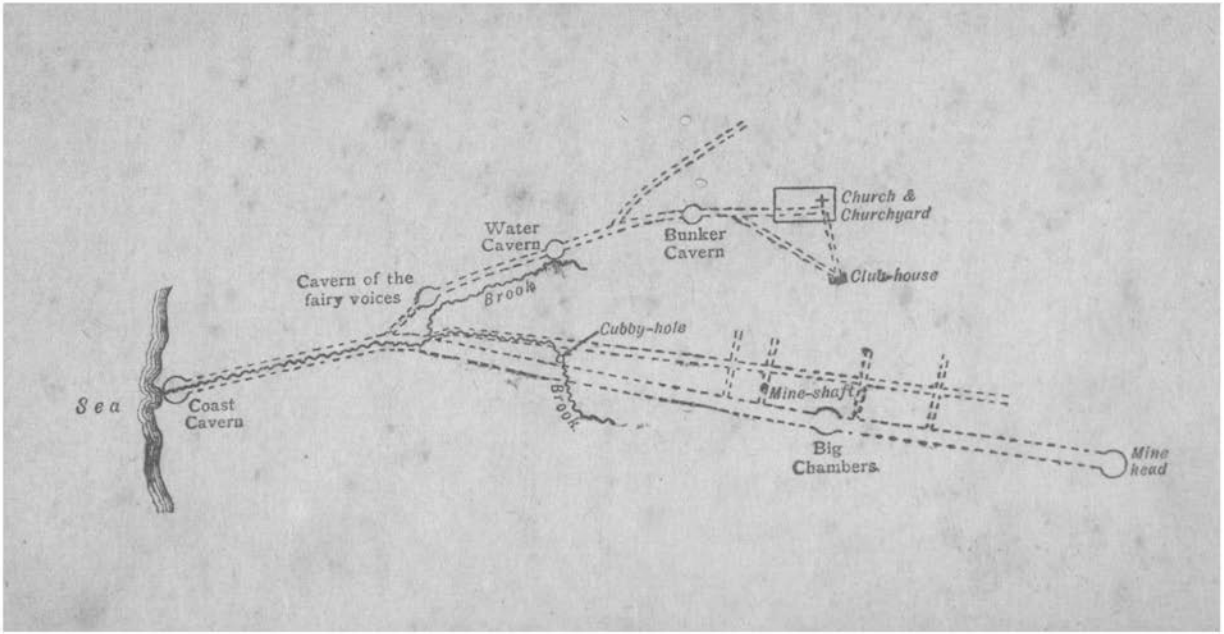
101204 ac

LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.
1922

00101204

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
	PLAN OF THE WORKINGS . . .	6
I.	JOHN SAUNDERSON'S NARRATIVE . .	7
II.	THE BUNKER CAVERN: JACK SAUNDERSON'S ADVENTURE . . .	34
III.	THE FAIRY VOICES: JACK SAUNDERSON'S ADVENTURE	50
IV.	JOHN SAUNDERSON'S NARRATIVE . .	77
V.	THE FOOTPRINTS: JACK SAUNDERSON'S ADVENTURE	95
VI.	BATES: JACK SAUNDERSON'S ADVENTURE	137
VII.	BAKER INTERVENES: JACK SAUNDERSON'S ADVENTURE	164
VIII.	IN FULL CRY: JACK SAUNDERSON'S ADVENTURE	195
IX.	JOHN SAUNDERSON'S NARRATIVE . .	224
X.	DESPAIR: JACK SAUNDERSON'S ADVENTURE	257
XI.	JOHN SAUNDERSON'S NARRATIVE . .	272
XII.	JOHN SAUNDERSON'S NARRATIVE . .	297


Church &
Churchyard
Water
Cavern
Bunker
Cavern
Club-house
Cavern of the
fairy voices
Brook
Cubby-hole
Sea
Coast
Cavern
Brook
Mine-shaft
Big
Chambers
Mine
head

THE HAUNTED SEVENTH

CHAPTER I

JOHN SAUNDERSON'S NARRATIVE

"You mean to say that he was never heard of again?"

"He simply vanished!" Sir Charles replied. "He lunched with me in this very club—in that very room where we have just had tea. He went out afterwards with a few balls to practise; and neither he nor his clubs were ever seen again!"

"But how very extraordinary," said Maude. "Was his disappearance never accounted for?"

"Never! He was presumed to have been drowned. That was exactly twenty-one years ago to this very day!"

"But," Sir Charles continued, "that was not the only case. Other men have unaccountably vanished, both before and since. The queer thing is, however, that these disappearances occur every seven years."

He gazed at each of us in turn, admonishing us with his finger, and speaking most impressively.

"There was the fisherman," he said, "who was supposed to be drowned in 1893, but who, nevertheless, had not taken out his boat. There was my poor friend who passed away in 1900. There was the village lad, poor boy, half an idiot, who was lost in 1907. There was that nice young fellow who disappeared in 1914."

He ceased.

"And this," Margery murmured with a shiver and a little gasp, "is the seventh year again."

"I am convinced," Sir Charles continued in a resonant voice, "that there is something mysterious and occult in these disappearances."

He fell into a brown study, muttering to himself. He was an imposing figure, sitting there in his chair, his elbows on the arms of it, leaning slightly forward, his gnarled and wrinkled hands clasped in front of him, his sparkling old eyes of faded blue gazing out into vacancy from under overhanging, shaggy brows—the whole crowned with a mop of glistening white hair.

"The seventh year," he muttered, "the seventh year!"

I caught Jack's eye and winked.

There were four of us besides Sir Charles Kennedy: Jack and I, my wife, Maude, and her sister Margery. We four had come down to Cornwall for a well-deserved and long-deferred holiday, bent on a three weeks' golf orgy. We had been there a few days

only; and, judging from the papers, we should be obliged to curtail our holiday and hurry back to town before the railway people went on strike.

For it was in the spring of 1921, the beginning of April to be exact, when the industrial struggle was at its height, and the miners' strike, which ruined so many industries and threw two or three million people out of work, had just started.

Business was at a standstill—hence our holiday. It was the first Jack and I had enjoyed since 1914; so, as you may imagine, we intended to make the most of it.

Jack was pessimistic; but he always was in those days; he said we ought to get back at once and join the Defence Force. I was optimistic and said we might as well hang on a bit longer as they would be sure to keep one or two trains running for the first week or two; and we could always join the Defence Force by letter.

I could not make out what was the matter with Jack. He had been down on his luck, quite without reason, so far as I could see, for a long time past. He had been rather badly shaken up by a shell just at the end of the war—not real shell-shock, you understand, but a bit jarred. That may have had something to do with it. Anyhow he had never been quite the same man since. Physically he was right enough; his complaint was mental.

No, I think his four years' soldiering had upset

him. He had never really cottoned to a peaceful business life since we had been demobilised. He had never said much—he always was a quiet chap—but I could see that the humdrum existence was getting on his nerves. He was, perhaps, as I thought, hankering after excitement; and if that were the case—by Jove! as you shall hear, he was destined to get his fill of it.

Or there might have been another reason. He was recommended for the Military Cross for a very gallant action, indeed. Then came trouble.

He and I had been told off to carry out a raid with our two companies—a small affair—to catch a few prisoners. We had everything cut and dried, and the Bosches quite unsuspecting. It was a soft thing; a real "sitter."

Unfortunately the Division and the Corps, and, I believe, the Army, too, suddenly sat up and took notice. They wanted to make a big flutter on our front, and this, they thought, was a good opportunity. So at the last moment they altered "zero," putting it back for an hour and giving us no time in which to warn all our people. As a result, some of Jack's bombers, working by the clock, started off at the original zero, and gave away the whole show. Jack tried to stop them and was wounded; so was I; the Bosches put down a barrage on our trenches, and the raid was a fiasco.

Jack did not get his M.C.; and we all believed, rightly or wrongly, that his name had been cut out because his bombers had ruined the performance. Though Jack had never said so, yet I have an idea that that was largely responsible for his moodiness. He got his M.C. at the end of the war all right; but, of course, that was by no means the same thing.

Well, whatever the cause of his depression might have been, he was certainly very poor company.

He would suffer from the most curious fits of abstraction and absent-mindedness, during which, if one spoke to him, he would not answer. Suddenly he would wake up, becoming his old self, alert and cheerful.

He was clean off his game, too. He would play a few holes admirably. Then his thoughts would wander, and he would go all to pieces.

Sometimes I thought that he must be in love; and I rather hoped that Margery might be the object of his adoration. But then, why was he so depressed? He could settle it one way or the other by asking her. He was by no means the sort of fellow to hang on and off. Very much the reverse, indeed; he had always been quick to decide and act.

No, I confess, I was most anxious about him.

He and I are cousins. When he was about four years old his father and mother both died, and my governor fetched him to live with us. We were

brought up together; we went to school together; we were at Oxford together; we joined up together in 1914; we were given commissions at the same time, after Loos; we served together all through the war; we've played rugger and cricket, hunted, shot and fought together. In fact, not only are we practically brothers, but we are first-class good pals. We are now in business together.

Jack is a big powerful chap; he can hit you like the kick of a mule, and you must be pretty strong on your pins to stand up to him. He stands about six foot one. I am about half an inch shorter than he is, but rather more heavily built. I could generally down him in a rough-and-tumble; but he could always turn me over cock-fighting. He is just a shade quicker than I am, perhaps.

I am speaking of the past, of course, when we were young bloods. Now we are respectable—eminently respectable—citizens. He is thirty-one and I am thirty-two; and we no longer work off exuberant spirits with a little horse-play.

As a matter of fact, though Jack has kept his figure wonderfully, I am putting on flesh in spite of everything I can do to keep it down. That's the worst sometimes of having been a bit of an athlete. When you come to sedentary work you are apt to run to fat—damnable!

Jack's handicap is two; so is mine; and we used to have thundering good games; Margery's handicap

is thirteen, while Maude's is fourteen. So we ought to have good foursomes; but we don't. Whichever of the two girls plays with Jack always gets beaten. It is Jack's fault; his wits are woolgathering. He is playing absolute trash, and that's all about it.

His real name by the by is "Hardy Carruthers Saunderson," the Christian names having been given to him after two great friends of his father's. When we two went to a preparatory school, aged about seven or eight, we were all taken to see the old *Victory* in Portsmouth Harbour. We were, of course, shown the brass plate in the deck where Nelson fell, and the circumstances were graphically described to us in the best Norman-English, the letter "H" being carefully suppressed.

After that the unfortunate Jack was rotted to death. It was "Kiss me 'Ardy" this, and "Kiss me 'Ardy" that until his life was 'ardly (I beg your pardon) worth living. He and I—for I being a year older than he was, naturally took up the cudgels on his behalf—were constantly fighting, and met with no little trouble in consequence. It was very good for us no doubt; we at all events learned to use our fists to some purpose. But the resulting punishments—for fighting was regarded as a misdemeanour—became irksome. So before we were sent to a public school, "Hardy Carruthers" was suppressed, and he became known in the family

circle as Jack for short. That, as you would expect, gave rise to complications; for my name is John Saunderson. For instance, a short time ago I met a fellow I had never seen before. We had a long buck together, and I told him one or two jolly good yarns. When we separated he said, "You know, you are quite different to what I expected."

"How so?" I asked.

"Well," he replied, "if you will forgive me for saying so, I was told that you were a most depressing fellow, instead of which—— You are Jack Saunderson, aren't you?"

"No," I said, "I'm John Saunderson. Jack Saunderson is my cousin."

Thereupon I explained to him that, up to the end of the war, Jack had been the cheeriest fellow imaginable, and that I feared there was something wrong with him—shell-shock, I thought.

Then I hurried off to rub it in to Jack. But it did him no good.

Well, on the day in question, at the beginning of April, we had just finished our usual foursome. Jack and I were sitting in the club dining-room waiting for tea. The two girls were tidying themselves in the ladies' branch of the club house.

Our conversation ceased when they came in, followed by Mrs. Penryhn with the tea. We chatted for a few minutes with Mrs. Penryhn, the delightfully friendly woman who does the catering for the club.

We then fell to at our grub, and talked over the next day's programme. Jack described at great length a game he had played that morning with one Baker, who had won on the last green. Jack had found his game again, and was rather pleased with himself; for this chap, Baker, was very hot stuff, and played like a pro. or a first-class amateur. We wondered who he was. According to Jack, he was a smart-looking fellow, slightly built, smallish all round, but lissom as a cat. He drove a wonderfully long ball, so Jack said. Margery had made his acquaintance, too, and said that she had once met him at a dance, that he was a beautiful dancer, and very good-looking, a dark man with rather queer eyes and long eyelashes. She liked the look of him. She had watched the two drive off from the first tee; and, like Jack, had been tremendously impressed by his style.

Margery herself is rather beautiful; in fact, very beautiful. She has grey eyes—call 'em green if you want to annoy her—starry, like liquid pools as the saying goes, with dark eyelashes and eyebrows and hair—a lot of the last—curly too, or wavy, as she says it is. There is a distinct difference between curly and wavy, I'm told; and the latter is the classier of the two.

I won't attempt to describe her kit—one cannot of course; at least a man cannot do it justice. All I know is that she is a picture, well-built, smartly

turned out, carries herself well and moves gracefully, as a healthy English girl, fond of outdoor sports, should do. In addition to that she is a real good sort, cheery and good-tempered with, however, a spice of the devil in her and a somewhat pronounced will of her own when she chooses. She also has a nice soft voice and is an excellent listener—two very good things in a woman. She is better even than Maude in that respect. When I tell them a story twice, as may happen once in a way, Maude lets me know of it fast enough. Now, Margery never does.

As I tell Jack he might search the whole world through and Heaven and Mars and all the other planets and he would not find a more ideal woman for a wife. But all he does is to wag his head and look wise. I'm fairly fed up with him now and then. She's got quite a good bit of money too—which is not to be sneezed at in these hard times.

Just towards the end of the war Jack and I were both knocked over—by the same shell as a matter of fact—and we found ourselves together in the same base hospital. Here we were nursed by Maude. Margery was nursing there too; but we met her only once or twice.

We were soon patched up and went back to the regiment; but after I was demobilised I had to go sick again to have a piece of bone removed from my leg. That meant three months in hospital; and, as luck would have it, Maude nursed me again. I

promptly fell in love with her and we became engaged. As time went on I began to think that Jack had been hit too. It was only after I was engaged to Maude that I guessed it; but I am now almost certain that the dear old chap stood aside to give me my chance. I feel, as you can easily understand, that I cannot do too much for him. But the only thing I can think of is to induce him to transfer his affections to Margery.

After all there's nothing in it. The two girls are twins and as like as two pins. Maude is certainly rather darker than Margery; but it is hardly noticeable and then only in a bright light. They sometimes, for fun, take advantage of the likeness and dress similarly, with, however, some little variation in the colour of a ribbon, that a man would notice. Then they change the bow round secretly, and find great amusement in befogging some miserable devil. They tried the game on with me when I first became engaged to Maude. I brought her the engagement ring; and they both came into the room dressed exactly alike. I'm hanged if I could tell t'other from which. They fairly puzzled me, each swearing that she was Maude. So, as a last resource, and the only possible solution, I kissed them both. Then I knew the difference.

Well, now, I have tried to explain our mentality. It is important in the light of later events. Jack

was lugubrious, while the rest of us were cheery and light-hearted. Jack and Margery had been handsomely beaten in our foursome and that had depressed Jack still more. We were, all three of us, trying to cheer him up while awaiting our tea.

While we were having tea in came the oldest inhabitant, as we called him to ourselves, Sir Charles Kennedy. He is close on eighty, they tell me—as fine and sturdy an old chap as ever stepped. He plays a round of golf every morning of his life and seldom stops for weather so long as he can get anyone to play with him.

His handicap is eighteen. Jack or I try to give him a stroke when we take him on and he beats us every time. He knows the links like the palm of his hand and is as cunning as a fox. His drive is little over a hundred yards, but he never misses it, and his ball is always about the same spot. He plods along with an old baffy; he shovels the ball on to the green with a niblick; and his putting is really deadly.

His delight when he wins his match, as he nearly always does, is good to see. He lunches at the club, snoozes in an arm-chair afterwards, no matter what noise is going on, and wakes up for tea; then he plays bridge till about seven o'clock, when he toddles off home. He is a bachelor and has been a member of the club since it was started about thirty or forty years ago, I believe. He has some funny,

or what we thought to be funny, yarns about this neighbourhood. But after our experiences we no longer think them so humorous; and we no longer wink at each other when we think he isn't looking.

It is these very experiences that I have set out to relate. A Bowdlerised edition of them came out in the papers at the time; but the authorities, for some reason best known to themselves, refused to make the story public and managed to get the whole affair suppressed. A question was asked in the House about it; but the reply merely stated that it was not to the public interest to discuss it.

So there the matter rested; though I for one have always thought that the full story should have been published when it occurred.

Jack, however, who was one of the principal actors, stuck in his toes. He seems to imagine that he has something to be ashamed of, or he does not like giving himself away—or something of that sort. However, he has now sworn by all his gods to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

Sir Charles had slept peacefully in the smoking-room while we four had been chattering in the dining-room; but when he woke up and came into the dining-room, we asked him to join our party. As the oldest inhabitant he evidently felt that he had a certain proprietary claim to the club house, the links and even to the church; and enquired in an anxious tone what we thought of them all. In

our inmost hearts we were inclined to laugh at the links, as links ; they were so short ; a drive, a chip shot and one or perhaps two putts should be enough for most of the holes ; but we were, of course, too polite to say so in so many words. We preferred to enlarge on the beauties of the course—the lovely turf, if somewhat rough, the natural sandhills, bunkers and bent grasses which punished a topped or crooked drive so severely, and, above all, the glorious views. The two girls, especially, waxed poetical over the scenery as we had seen it that morning—the beautiful bay, the colours of the smooth sea varying from the deepest indigo to the palest of emerald green, with streaks of yellow and red in it. It was extraordinary ; I could not have believed that an English sea could have produced such colouring. Maude went into raptures over it.

Just see the cliffs on the far side, yellow, brown and red, where lit by the sun, dark blue in the shade ; here and there, half way up, a yawning black chasm with a splotch of brilliant metallic green immediately beneath it as if a giant had flung an enormous bucketful of paint at it. This, we were told, was caused by the copper or tin in the over-flow water from the mines.

Then look at the black rocks, jagged and fearsome, at the foot of the cliffs, standing boldly out into the sea ; and away and beyond these the distant blue

coast-line fading into the haze of the horizon. Every now and again a great Atlantic roller would flash into dazzling white at the bases of the rocks, submerging them and spouting its foaming masses half-way up the cliff.

It beats the Mediterranean into a cocked hat.

Sir Charles impressed on us that we had seen this sea in its softest mood, gentle and mild, its glittering surface of glass a mere screen to hide the treacherous currents and great ocean billows. But wait till we saw it in a real nor'-wester when its mask was off.

Jack and I were struck by the formation of the sandhills. There was no design about them; they cocked up here and they cocked up there with grassy valleys between them. As a rule there is something in the nature of a watershed even in sandhills; there was nothing of the sort here.

We were told that this formation was due to the fact that there was a buried village under these sandhills—buried some centuries ago—and that where the sand had met with an obstruction, a more pretentious house, or probably hut, than the others, it had piled itself up and made a sandhill. As houses were buried, others were built clear of the sand and buried in their turn. The actual village, as now existing, was well over a mile from the site of the former one. The modern village was only saved by the sowing of the marram grasses on the sandhills; and it was by this means that the

blowing sand was caught and finally chained. These sandhills were growing ever higher and higher, and it would before long become necessary to reconstruct some of the holes; for it was unfair to expect a man to loft his ball, when driving, over a hill about eighty feet high and about the same distance from the tee. That would mean a lot of money; and the membership of the club being already very small, it was doubtful whether the links would survive it, especially as so many other courses had sprung up along this coast within the last few years. Sir Charles was philosophical and supposed that everything, even a golf course, has its appointed time and must die in the end. He hoped and thought, however, that it would last out his time.

We asked him how the buried village came to be built, in the first instance, where it had been—there was no harbour, or even cove, at that point. We were told that a harbour had once existed but had silted up with the sand—as we should see if we followed the course of the river at low tide. It now wound through beds of quicksands for a mile or more where in former times there was deep water right up to the foot of the low rocky cliffs on which the old village was situated. It was quite possible to walk along the foot of the sandhills at low tide; but we must be careful not to bathe anywhere near the mouth of the river.

It was dangerous, the more so as the bathing in the bay was generally very safe.

The idea of bathing at this time of year did not appeal to us at all. We shuddered; for it was beastly cold even in the "Cornish Riviera."

Sir Charles laughed with us, but it was then that he told us of the many cases of men who had disappeared at this time of year, presumably drowned. It was a feature of the climate that one would get, suddenly, in the middle of winter, a few days of blazing hot weather, when, dressed in winter clothes, one toiled, perspiring, round the links; and the calm, cool sea looked as tempting as nectar to the thirsty man.

These disappearances generally occurred about this time of year, though somewhat later in the season. They nearly always happened after two or three days of bright, warm weather. There had been about a week of north-easterly gales—very cold; then the wind had swung round to the south with two or three days, or perhaps a week or two of glorious weather; then to the south-west with heavy rain and gales. The bathing theory was one explanation. The hot sun and smooth sea were tempting, but the water was bitingly cold, and either cramp or the quicksands had done the rest. He had warned us purposely, for we were now experiencing the exact type of weather. There had been a week of cold nor'-easters; now the wind was

in the south and the weather perfect; in a day or two it would swing to the south-west and we should have gales and rain for a week. "So whatever you do DON'T BATHE!" he said.

Another explanation of these disappearances was simple. It was that the lost men had fallen over the cliffs. The path to the hotel ran at one point perilously near the edge; and it would be easy, in the dark, for anyone to fall over. He strongly advised us to carry torches with us if we went back that way after dark.

There was a third explanation to which, however, he gave but little credence. During the war, when the German submarines blockaded our coasts, we lost many ships in the Bristol Channel; and there was no doubt that the German submarines found this part of the coast a favourite lurking place. The theory was advanced by some of the fishermen that the Germans had a depot of petrol in some of the caves and caverns. The last man who was lost just before the war was a young sailor. He was not only convinced that war was imminent, but that the Germans would use submarines, and would form depots of petrol at suitable points on our coasts. He proved to be a good prophet. Like many young sailors and soldiers he formed a truer conception of the methods the Bosches would employ than did the responsible authorities. He was always exploring the caves; and he came back

one night saying that he had seen a man come out of one of them at dusk, turn round, when he found himself observed, and run back into it. He followed him in; but the cave was a small one and there was nobody there. He was astounded, as he was quite convinced that his eyes had not misled him. He said, laughingly, that here was a secret German depot; and that he would not rest until he had discovered it. Well, when a few days later he disappeared all the caves were very carefully searched, but without result. Two years later, when the submarine blockade of our coasts was in full swing, the wiseacres of the village associated the disappearance of the young sailor with the "Hidden Hand." But there was not the smallest evidence to support the theory. What was far more probable was that the young sailor penetrating too deeply into one of the caves, half way up the cliffs, further along the coast, had lost his way in the old disused mine workings. For most of those caves were mere outlets through which water was pumped when, formerly, the mines were in use.

"What a ghastly death," said Maude with a shudder. "I suppose he must have starved?"

"Or fallen down a mine shaft," Sir Charles replied.

These yarns roused our curiosity. We wanted to know all about everything and we kept Sir Charles talking till well past seven o'clock.

Yes, he told us, this was a very romantic part

of the coast. There were all sorts of legends about smuggling and treasure buried in the old village. Since the war, a fresh crop of legends was growing. There were several caves amongst the rocks at the foot of the sandhills which were popularly supposed to be connected by underground passages with the church and that very club house, which had been originally, so it was said, a smuggler's cottage. These caves had been explored when men had disappeared; but it was impossible to get up them more than a few yards, and no cave had yet been found which would give an entry into these supposed subterranean passages. He, himself, rather doubted the existence of them; because most of the huts of the old village, being made of stone, had been pulled down and built up again in what was believed, at the time, to be a safe position. But there were no written records, and it was certainly possible that some of the stone buildings had been overwhelmed by the sand before they could be pulled down and removed. There was one legend, indeed, that a whole family had been buried in the sand; and there was another story that a beautiful girl, the belle of the village, had been seized by a jealous swain, when the inhabitants were fleeing before the onrush of the sand, and detained in the doomed cottage, where she and her revengeful lover were buried alive. It was said that the church and the club house and, indeed, a part of the links, notably

the church bunker, and a pool that existed near the fourteenth tee, were haunted by this girl. It was also popularly believed that a hobgoblin, or monster of sorts, haunted the buried village. He was commonly used to terrify naughty children. On two occasions within his memory caddies had rushed back from the churchyard neighbourhood, with pallid faces and starting eyes, swearing that they had heard roaring and groaning coming up from the ground. He, himself, had, on one occasion, gone out to explore with the club professional but without result. That was when his poor friend was lost. But the inhabitants would not pass willingly by this bunker or the churchyard after nightfall. There was one thing which, doubtless, increased the romance of this bunker. It was filled with, or emptied of sand according to the direction and strength of the wind. Easterly gales would scour it out to a depth of ten feet or more ; westerly gales would fill it to the brim with sand from the adjacent sandhill. It was really a very extraordinary thing ; there was seldom the same depth of sand in it two days running. Even in dead calm weather, such as this day had been, the bunker gradually emptied. But that was also the case with some of the other bunkers. Then there was the water hole he had mentioned which was always full, no matter how dry the weather, and which, yet, never overflowed. A spring no doubt, with an

underground outlet at a certain level. This spring was said to possess remarkable medicinal qualities. He confessed he had never tested it as he disliked drinking cold water.

Not far from this pool there was an outcrop of rock. It was said that voices had been heard issuing from between the great boulders.

Then the old sexton had heard whispering in the church on two occasions after men had disappeared; and the theory was that their ghosts had returned to the church and were haunting it. That was a very queer thing. For on the occasion when his friend was drowned he, himself, had been sitting in the club house, in this very room, in this very chair, about nine o'clock in the evening, when he heard whispering—or, he could have sworn he heard it; he could have sworn he heard his own name spoken. So impressed was he that he rang the bell and asked Mrs. Chard, the old caterer, the mother of the present woman, if she could hear anything. But she was so upset at the idea that she would not even listen. He, himself, was rather shaken. He had not been a believer in the spirit world; but, at the time, he felt a conviction that his friend's spirit was endeavouring to communicate with him. He sat, holding his breath, and listening; but four fellows arrived to dine and play bridge at the club that night and he could hear no more. He went home and listened half the night but without

result. He sat nearly the whole of the next day in this room in the club listening; but, unfortunately, the place was very full that day—it was in the palmy days of the club—and he could hear nothing, except just at one moment when there happened to be silence. He again thought he heard his name whispered. He supposed it was all imagination; but he was very fond of his old pal, whose death was a great shock to him.

Of course fancy was apt to play queer tricks with all of us at times, even with the most sensible and level-headed of men, if it caught him in just the right mood. He supposed he must have been in just that right mental condition. There were all the legends and traditions in which he had taken great interest and in which he had, indeed, soaked himself. There was one tradition, to the effect that the ghosts of all the inhabitants who had been lost in the buried village met together at fixed periods of some years' interval—every seven years, it was said—and discussed who should be the next victim. When the decision had been reached, the hobgoblin, who was no less a person than the miscreant lover, was ordered to catch and sacrifice the victim, though exactly how he accomplished the fell deed was not known. But the spirits, it was said, had been heard conversing—soft, gentle, musical voices like the cooing of doves, which lent an additional horror to their cold-blooded business. The hobgoblin had

also been heard bellowing and groaning ; and it was generally supposed that the unpleasant task of executing the victim had been laid on him as a penance, much against his will—as a sort of interest, so to speak, on his original investment in murder—and that, in the end, he would be obliged to expiate the whole gigantic debt. The actual conversation of what might be termed the blood-council of spooks had even been reported, though it had not gained universal belief, inasmuch as the gentleman who had overheard it was a well-known smuggler, and consequently interested in surrounding the caves and underground passages, if such existed, with a supernatural atmosphere. That was, probably, the explanation of all these yarns.

" You see," said Sir Charles, " full up, as I was, to the very brim with these legends of supernatural voices, it only required my poor friend's unaccountable disappearance to put me into such a frame of mind that imagination could play tricks with me. The legends alone, or my friend's disappearance alone, would not have done it ; but the two combined——"

" Like a Seidlitz powder," I remember saying. It was a harmless, if feeble, remark ; but Sir Charles was distinctly annoyed ; and I thought, for a moment, that he was about to visit me with his displeasure.

Instead of that he said, " But I shall make you

ladies nervous if I go on with these tales ; and you will say it is my fault if you cannot sleep to-night."

Maude and Margery scoffed at the idea and urged him to carry on, saying rudely that nobody ever took any notice of my blundering and stupid remarks.

But he would not—for that night, at least. Perhaps on some future occasion he would tell them more.

I had, quite unintentionally, dried up the fount of his inspiration. For which I was sorry.

The conversation switched round to the industrial troubles ; thence, of course, to coal mines and miners ; finally to the tin mines. It was our first visit to Cornwall, and we were interested in everything. We asked if the great strike had affected the tin miners. Not to any serious extent as yet, we were told, except, of course, in the matter of the supply of fuel, which had prejudiced all industries. It was feared, indeed, that most of the tin mines would have to be closed down unless the coal miners resumed work very soon. But, as a matter of fact, some long-disused mines were being reopened. There was one about a mile inland of the club house —we might have seen it during our tramps abroad ? But no, we had not. Well, the owners, whoever they might be, were bringing some of the unemployed coal miners down to work it. Whether the venture would prove a success or not was doubtful ; it

appeared to him (Sir Charles) that it was a bit of a gamble. Truculent fellows these coal miners—preposterous idea that they should expect to be paid high wages by the taxpayer for work they would not do. For himself, he could not imagine how any industry could pay its way which was dependent on such queer customers. But Jack and I were up on our hind legs at once on hearing these remarks, saying that we had served with miners and swore by them. Sir Charles apologised laughingly for treading on our pet corns; and though refusing to recede from his position, admitted that there might be good miners as well as bad ones. Anyhow, he maintained, good or bad, they had played the devil with the country in pursuit of their own selfish interests. We, in our turn, argued that the miners were rather like grown-up children, easily swayed by agitators; and that the whole thing was the fault of the Government in that it had allowed these agitators a free hand. We then, of course, came to the problem of open and concealed sores. You know the sort of thing every one was discussing at that time—whether incipient revolution should be suppressed by force or permitted to evaporate in gas.

Maude, her experiences as a nurse in her mind, said that it was often necessary to leave a wound open for a time, or even insert a tube in it to prevent it from closing.

Margery chimed in with the remark that it was

nevertheless, necessary to dress the wound with antiseptics.

Jack and I preferred the more drastic method of shutting down the wound, so far as the body politic was concerned, and sitting on it.

Sir Charles wound up the debate. He approved Margery's solution and explained that the correct antiseptic was ridicule applied with the brush of propaganda. A foolish idea, I thought.

After that Sir Charles and I fixed up a match for Monday morning, as Jack was going away to see his aunt, and we broke up.

CHAPTER II

THE BUNKER CAVERN

JACK SAUNDERSON'S ADVENTURE.

I AM Jack Saunderson writing. My cousin John has worried me into describing my experiences in Cornwall in the spring of 1921. I have finally given in to him, partly, I confess, to obtain a little peace, but, primarily, because the most absurd and preposterous rumours have gained credence amongst my friends and relatives as to some supposed supernatural powers I possess.

I am regarded with exaggerated respect or a half-veiled contempt according as people believe or disbelieve in occult powers.

It is unpleasant; and I wish to be treated again as an ordinary individual.

I have therefore promised John to make a clean breast of the story so far as I am concerned.

* * * * *

One Saturday morning, early in April, John and I played our customary game. But our usual four-

some in the afternoon was cancelled ; for I expected a telegram calling me away for the week-end.

Maude and Margery had decided, therefore, to go to Penzance to see a school friend.

John and I had a very close game and finished all square. I am going to tell you something about it for it bears on later events. John was rather off his game to start with and I won the first two holes. Then he suddenly recovered his form and won the next two. We halved the fifth and the sixth. The seventh is a very interesting hole. It is about four hundred yards long. Stretching across the front of the tee are two rather high sandhills with a depression between them. The church tower, about two hundred and fifty yards from the tee, shows above the right sandhill ; while the corner of the churchyard, a high stone-faced bank, appears through the depression. The hole is a dog leg, bearing to the right round the churchyard. To play this hole properly you want a long and accurate tee shot. You must drive over, or rather through, the depression, carrying the corner of the churchyard, with a slight pull on your ball. Your ball will then pitch on a downward slope and run a long way to a good lie, whence an easy mashie will put you on the green. If you play too much to the right, the sandhill will catch a low well-hit ball ; or if you loft over it, you will be out of bounds in the churchyard. If you play too much to the left, the

left sandhill will catch you. If you loft over it, you will probably find yourself in the church bunker. If you play to the left of the sandhill—as short hitters do—you will be off your course; your ball will pitch on a slope, go further away to the left and you will not reach the green with your second.

John drove a gem of a shot, through the depression, carrying the churchyard. I drove a shade too much to the right. My ball touched a jutting rock in the side of the right hand sandhill and kicked sharply to the left behind the left sandhill—into the churchyard bunker for a dead certainty. John was jubilant; he gibed at me as we tramped along through the depression carrying our clubs. "You are done now, my boy," he said. "You won't get out of that bunker under about three shots, for it's ten to twelve feet deep and the banks are overhanging. You'd better give up the hole."

I told him exactly what I thought of him and then set to work to look for my ball. We stood at the edge of the bunker, which was like a big basin about thirty to forty feet across, and looked in. The bunker had been scoured out by the wind of the last few days; there was not a blade of grass in it; the sand was perfectly smooth without footmarks or depressions of any sort; the ball was not in it. We searched round the edge, then all round about the place; but there was no sign of the ball—a

new three-shilling colonel too! Like everybody else I hate losing any ball, but especially a brand-new one. However, I hate still more wasting the whole day looking for a ball which does not intend to be found. So, finally, I chucked it; and we tramped off to the eighth tee. Fate punished John for his gibes very promptly by giving him a stymie at the eighth. It punished him again at the ninth where he hooked into the rough—and the "rough" on these links is hell—and lost his ball. I was careful not to jeer at him, merely pointing out—tapping the wood of my driver at the same time to disarm Fate—that Fortune would always punish a man who was so ill-advised, so ignoble, so scrubby, as to laugh at a comrade in distress. I tried to compensate for the mildness of my language by putting the nastiest inflexion possible into my tone; and I can't help thinking that it was this nastiness of tone, and not the actual words I used, which induced Fate to drop it into me so severely!

Well, we fought it out; and as I have already said, we were all square at the end of the round. We talked of going on to the nineteenth hole, but decided that it was too good a match to spoil, especially as we had each won two games and we had three more weeks in which to play the conqueror. Besides John had to write letters and wanted to get back to the hotel for lunch. I waited on at the club

for my telegram which never arrived. I lunched alone, and sat, yawning, over picture papers for an hour or so. Becoming bored I decided I would go out and play round with my mashie and half a dozen balls, leaving word at the club whereabouts I should be if a telegram arrived for me. The club house was empty; the "oldest inhabitant" had played round with the pro. in the morning, and, according to his usual custom on a Saturday, had gone home for lunch. The pro. was away for the week-end; the caddies had all gone away to look at a footer match; and the links were deserted. I told Mrs. Penryhn that I would be found about the first seven holes, which were all in the neighbourhood of the club house, and off I went.

I played shockingly. I was hitting out, trying to see how far I could get and kept hooking into the rough. Before I had done four holes I had lost three balls; they were very old ones, so that it did not matter.

In fact, my mind's eye was not on the ball; it was wandering. I was thinking of Margery and what nonsense it was having to go away on business till Monday. I had looked forward to our proposed jaunt on Sunday to the top of one of the neighbouring hills where we hoped to sit and gaze at the view, taking our lunch with us. I guessed that Maude would, on one excuse and another, carry John off, leaving me alone with Margery; and I

chuckled as I thought of the look of astonishment on John's stupid old face which would quickly give way to an ingenuous expression of extreme innocence. How Margery and I would laugh; it would be as good as a play. And I was to lose all this. It was an infernal nuisance.

I might mention here that John and Maude were so happy themselves that they were determined to couple up Margery and myself, with or without our leave, notwithstanding that we both were quite content to remain very good pals.

I arrived at the seventh hole; and I thought I would see if I could carry the churchyard bunker with my mashie. Then I intended to have another look for the ball I had lost in the morning. The wind, I noticed, had swung round to the south-west and was blowing gently in my face. I laughed as I thought of our foursome the previous afternoon. Margery had sliced her drive over the right sandhill. The wind had caught it, and we found the ball in a deep gully at the foot of the churchyard wall—a beast of a lie; and I had to play back with my niblick. But Margery was not at all upset, as she ought to have been; for she had discovered a clump of white violets growing close to a great crack in the rocks. And when I complained bitterly of the place she had put me into, all she said was, "Aren't they darlings?"

This time I kept my mind's eye firmly fixed on

the ball, and hit out manfully. It was a good shot, clearing the left-hand sandhill beautifully. I marched after it, and there was my ball in the bottom of the bunker! As I stood on the edge about to jump down, I saw grass right in the bottom of the bunker which certainly had not been visible that morning. My lost ball might be in amongst it. What a funny thing! Then I remembered that, the night before, Sir Charles had told us that even though there was hardly any wind, yet when the breeze was from the south-east it scoured out this bunker. There certainly was not enough wind to lift the sand out of the bunker. Then where was it going?

Even as I thought thus, I jumped down and found the sand much deeper and softer than I had expected. I went to the grass in the middle and picked up my ball. As I straightened up again, I saw a bog hole close under and partially covered by the overhanging bank. It was almost hidden by grass, and indeed could be seen only by a man right down in the bottom of the bunker who happened to be bending down and looking in that particular direction.

I walked over to it and looked in. There was the ball I had lost in the morning reposing about a yard inside the hole and some two to three feet below where I was standing. It was resting on a carpet of matted grass. I tried to hook it out with my

mashie, but merely pushed it in deeper. I lay down and reached for it, but could not quite touch it. So I got into the hole feet foremost. The matted grass, which I had thought to be solid, was simply a treacherous screen ; and directly I put my weight on it, down I went. I remember grabbing at the grass to save myself, but it broke away.

The next thing I remember I was lying on my back at the bottom of a cavern, gazing up at a hole above me through which I had fallen. A few feet above me a ledge of rock projected from the wall ; and on the corner of it I noticed, in a dreamy fashion, that what looked like a small tuft of very fine, reddish-coloured grass was growing. As I became more fully conscious, it struck me that this grass was hair ; and that the rock was red as with blood at the point. Slowly it dawned on me that this was my own hair and my own blood ; and for the first time I felt a most abominable ache and pain on the side of my head.

I put up my left hand to feel my head, and discovered that my left wrist and arm were strained and that my hand was covered with blood. I moved with the intention of getting up, and instantly felt sick. So I lay still for a few minutes ; then made another effort. It was successful ; but I was groggy, not only on account of feeling extremely sick, but because my left ankle was twisted.

I was more or less all right again after a short

rest. My head was cut, as were the knuckles of my left hand, while my left wrist and ankle were rather dicky. Otherwise there was no real damage done.

My first idea was to get out of the hole, go back to the club house and wash my head and hand; but I very soon saw that that was more easily said than done.

The cavern was about twelve feet deep, with a roof of rock arching above me, and about ten feet broad. With difficulty I managed to balance myself, kneeling on the ledge of rock, which was about three feet from the ground. With greater difficulty I managed to stand up on it. But it was all I could do to keep my balance, and, reach up as I would, my hand was a foot or more short of the hole. Besides, there was nothing to grasp except grass. I got hold of one or two pieces of stiff bent grass, with the result that a shower of sand fell on my face and into my eyes. This upset my balance, and I had to jump to the floor. I landed on my right foot, touching the ground but lightly with my left, but even so I received a sharp twinge in my ankle.

Fortunately the floor of the cavern was covered with sand to a depth of two or three feet. The slight jar made me feel sick again. The cool breeze, however, quickly revived me. It struck me as queer that there should be a breeze in such a

place ; and then I saw that the cavern was in reality part of a tunnel, through which a strong draught flowed, and that the sand I was sitting on was blowing steadily in one direction, rustling softly past me. I saw also that there was a steady shower of sand falling from the roof above and blowing away down the tunnel. So that accounted for the way in which the bunker above was scoured out. And it would, of course, fill up again with a shift of wind from the sandhill to the south-west of it. I then tried to get my bearings. There was the rock on which I had fallen with my left hand which had been grasping the mashie—by the way, where was the mashie ? I found it close by, buried in the sand.

Well, I had been standing in the bunker facing south, and must have pitched forward on to the ledge with my hand and head. My hand must have taken the weight, or I should certainly have fractured my skull. The ledge was, then, on the south side of the tunnel, which ran east and west. The draught was blowing from the west, according to this calculation—and that was as it should be, for the wind had gone round to the south-west since lunch.

So the tunnel to the westward ought to lead to the church or the club house or both, and that to the east to the rocks on the shore and the smothered village. There was evidently a certain amount of

truth in the yarns Sir Charles had told us; and I looked forward to exploring this passage thoroughly with John. It might explain the queer disappearances of which Sir Charles had told us.

Up to this time no idea of the danger I was in had dawned on me. I sat quietly recovering myself. No more golf for me for two or three days. Neither my wrist nor ankle was badly hurt, but both were slightly sprained and swollen. A rotten prospect. I wondered if Margery would keep me company or play golf every day. Anyhow I must be up and doing.

I again climbed up on the ledge, but this time with my mashie in my hand. I reached up with some vague idea of attracting attention. I poked about at the hole and widened it somewhat, bending down my head to escape the shower of sand. But the hole was partially closed with thick matted grasses. I tried to drag these down with the mashie, thinking I might manage to climb up with the help of them. I was still rather dazed, and my plans were erratic.

My efforts were quite useless, and after a time I was obliged to desist, feeling sick and dizzy. I stepped down again from the ledge and sat down to rest.

It was while I was resting that I began to feel very thirsty. This made me think. How long was I to stay in this place?

It was Saturday afternoon. There was no play

on Sunday, and nobody ever came to the club except Sir Charles, who sometimes, as we had been told, took his tea there in the afternoon. I laughed to myself as I thought that I might perhaps have to stay where I was till Monday morning. How old John would chaff me! But that would not matter if Margery were sympathetic. Even now I wasn't at all alarmed. John would, of course, come and look for me when he had finished writing his letters if I had not turned up.

Then I suddenly remembered the expected telegram. If it arrived, Mrs. Penryhn would come and look for me, or send her small son to find me. But if it did not come, she would not look for me. John would not look for me in any case. He would think that I had gone away, and would not expect me back till Monday afternoon. So it depended on the telegram whether I should get out that afternoon or have to wait there till Monday. I now hoped devoutly that it would arrive, and laughed to myself as I thought how, a short time ago, I had been cursing the possibility of having to go away at all. Mrs. Penryhn or the boy might be looking for me at this very moment.

I scrambled rather hurriedly to my feet and climbed again on to my ledge. I reached up with the mashie, parted the grasses in the hole above me, and shouted:

"Hullo-o-o!" I roared; "Miss—is Penryhn-n-n!"

Then I listened. My voice reverberated in the tunnel; and for an instant I could hear nothing.

Then I heard, as if from a great distance, the echo of my own voice . . . "Penryhn-n-n!"

All was still except for a continuous rustle of sand.

I noticed that the sand was falling down from the hole above me in far greater quantities than before. I then remembered that the bunker above me had been full of sand when we had first arrived down in these parts. The real significance of this fact did not yet strike me; nevertheless, I became a bit panicky, and roared and shouted and even yelled in my best falsetto in the hope that it would carry further. I stopped and listened, and heard a distant repetition of my falsetto scream. It sounded as though some one was jeering at me. I roared and shouted again at the pitch of my voice till I almost cracked my vocal chords—or whatever it is one does crack when one over-shouts oneself. I then tried to jump to get a grip of the grasses above me or a bit of the rock. But the only result was that I took a nasty toss. I landed again on the ledge of rock on my sound leg, and fell off it on to my damaged arm. Fortunately, again, the landing was very soft, and beyond an extra twinge of pain in my wrist I was not damaged. I now lay on the soft sand and reviewed my position. I could not get out unaided. If the boy had heard

me screaming he would probably think it was the ghost of the haunted bunker.

By Jove! So this was the explanation of this haunted bunker. Some of the fellows who had disappeared had tumbled in here, and their yells had been heard and ascribed to hobgoblins. A cheery outlook for me!

If Mrs. Penryhn heard the screaming she would also, perhaps, ascribe it to a ghost—the people were very superstitious in these parts—or so I had been told. No more screaming; I must shout her name and "help."

John would not look for me; and would not bother about me till Monday afternoon. Neither would Margery nor Maude. "The ghost," I remembered, had been heard in the church and the club house. So the tunnel probably ran to both those places. I must try it and see; but not until after dark, in case Mrs. Penryhn came to find me. I might find some way out, but if I failed I ought to be under the club house if possible after dinner, when the bridge fiends would meet for their evening rubber. During the services on Sunday I must try and get under the church, and shout for help; and if that should prove useless, I must be under the club about tea time, trying to make myself heard.

I wound up my watch.

Supposing all these proved a failure, I would try the tunnel towards the coast on Sunday evening.

But the very first thing was to find water. Then I remembered the water hole just short of the fourteenth green that was always full and that had no visible outlet. The tunnel might pass under or near it; and the water would be almost certain to find its way into it.

It was worth trying. Fortunately I had taken Sir Charles' advice, and carried an electric flash-light in case I went back to the hotel after dark. I took it from my pocket and found it was undamaged. So far so good. I now had my plans cut and dried, as I thought; and it is always half the battle to know exactly what you intend to do, and how you mean to do it. But man proposes——!

The first thing was to shout a bit more. I looked up and was astonished at the rapidity with which the hole through which I had fallen was filling up. The stiff matted grass was evidently strong enough to support the sand; for the hole was not perpendicular, but ran obliquely at a steep slope. Even now the stiff grass, which had been pushed aside when I fell through, was gradually resuming its original position, and sand was lodging on it. By degrees the hole would fill up as sand drifted into the bunker. Then I should, I supposed, be cut off from the outside world.

As I watched, a mass of sand fell, making a little heap on the floor. Presently more fell, increasing the size of the heap. But about fifty per cent of

it blew away down the tunnel. In a week or so the heap might be built up high enough for me to climb on top of it and so reach the hole.

And in the meantime ?

I got up again on my ledge, raked out a mass of sand from the hole with my mashie, made a funnel of my hands and shouted Mrs. Penryhn's name, followed by " help."

There was no reply except that sneering echo.

" Help ! " I cried, and added very distinctly, " I am in the churchyard bunker ! "—then, " help, help, Mrs. Penryhn ! "

' R-y-h-n-n-n," came the echo and the rustle of the sand.

CHAPTER III

THE FAIRY VOICES

JACK SAUNDERSON'S ADVENTURE

THERE was a dim, religious light down in this cavern which I had discovered, though the hole above me still showed up clearly enough. But I was very thirsty, owing, doubtless, to the sand which had fallen into my mouth and the shouting and yelling in which I had indulged. So I decided that the very first thing to be done was to search for water. I walked, therefore, down the eastern tunnel, stepping carefully on account of my damaged ankle, as, also, to avoid hitting my head against the roof. For the passage was not more than five feet high and about two feet broad. It had evidently been roughly hewn through the rock, for great projections stood out from the ceiling, walls and floor. The last was, however, covered with a varying depth of sand, and caution was required to avoid stepping into unexpected and hidden holes. I found myself wondering where the passage

would lead me, and why it had originally been cut. I expected to find it blocked with sand presently; and that if I was to get out at all I must do so by the hole through which I had entered.

Suddenly I bethought me of the two golf balls in my pocket. Why should I not throw them up through the hole? I had better do it at once, before the hole became choked up with sand.

Back I went to the cavern. Once more I climbed on to the ledge and rootled at the hole with the mashie. Masses of sand fell; but I managed to enlarge the hole. One of the balls was a new one. Should I write something on it? I had a pencil and pocket-book, but no string. However, that was easily rectified. With my knife I cut a strip off one side of my handkerchief. I wrote an appeal for help on a page out of the pocket-book, and tied it round the best of the two balls with the piece of handkerchief. As showing how little fear I had at this time of not escaping from my unpleasant predicament, I might mention that I tied the message on to the best ball, so that when it was found, as of course it would be, I should get it back.

I started by throwing out the worst ball for practice. The first time it fell back. The second time it lodged in the sand at the side of the hole. I hooked it down again with my mashie. The hole was appreciably smaller than when I fell in. Evidently

the sand was blowing back into the bunker, while the grass, stiff, springy, bent grass, which I had displaced by my fall, was gradually reverting to its original position. The hole was now not much more than two feet square at my end of it. It was also shaped like a funnel; so that it required a good shot to get the ball away clean through it—the more especially as I had to chuck it up underhand. I was also balancing with difficulty, and could not draw my hand back on account of the wall behind me. However, the third shot was successful, and the ball went clean through the opening. Then, when too late, I cursed myself for an idiot. Why, in Heaven's name, had I not written a message on that ball too? Now if it were picked up it would give no clue to my whereabouts. This was a bad, a foolish mistake; and, as so often happens, it led directly to another. For in spite of all my golf experience, which should have taught me better, I continued grumbling to myself at my own stupidity—holding a *post-mortem*, so to speak, on my past mistake, instead of writing it off as a bad debt. That, I suppose, is the worst disease a golfer or any other man can suffer from—always groaning over past faults instead of concentrating attention on the present and future.

My very first shot with the good ball—the one with the message on it—was a beauty. I took careful aim and chucked it up as hard as I could;

and it was still light enough for me to see that it would pitch well clear of the bunker. That was what I wanted; for if it were to fall in the bunker itself it would soon be covered with sand.

But what an infernal, cast-iron idiot I had been not to write a message on the first ball! Now, I thought, I had better fasten another message on my mashie and throw that out. Without further thought, and still harping on my past imbecility, I proceeded to action. I wrote out another account of my predicament, tied it on to the handle, got up once more on to my ledge, and launched the mashie at the hole. But I drew my arm just a trifle too far back; my right hand at the end of the shaft of the club touched the rock behind me and deflected my shot. The mashie went partly through the opening and stuck there. I could not reach it anyhow. I tried every means I could think of to fetch it down, but without avail. Now, as I recognised too late, I had no means of clearing the opening of sand. What a fool I had been! Why couldn't I have thought it out more carefully?

So now I began to ring the changes on this second mistake; and to philosophise on the folly of doing so. I got down off my ledge, sat down on the sand, and took off my left shoe to ease the pain of my ankle. Yet it never entered my head to tie another message on to my shoe and throw that out. Here was the thing, of all others, to attract attention,

and I never thought of it until it was too late. Just as well, as events turned out, perhaps.

Well, I decided it was no use crying over spilt milk; and there was nothing for it but to resume my search for water.

By this time it was almost dark outside; and, of course, as black as pitch inside the cavern. But my torch showed me the right direction to take for the water hole. As I was about to start off, it struck me that the light of my torch, showing up through the hole, might attract attention. So I changed my plans to the extent of climbing up again on my ledge, holding the torch as close to the hole as I could, and directing the ray through it. I then bellowed "help" in case anyone was about. But my throat was so parched that I very quickly stopped shouting. Water was what I wanted. Food I could do without easily enough for forty-eight hours, or for four or five days for that matter, provided I could but find something to drink. So after waiting a few minutes to see if there was any answer to my shouts, I stepped down off the ledge and started on my search.

I decided that I must carefully husband the light of my torch. How long would it last? I had bought a refill for it just before I came down to Cornwall. Was it twelve, twenty-four, or forty-eight hours' continuous service that it would give? I could not remember.

I did not half like the idea of leaving the bunker hole; because, suppose I had attracted attention and somebody came to see what was wrong and found nothing—well, any of the inhabitants would clear off as fast as their legs would take them, saying their prayers, and would not come back again in a hurry. But unsatisfied thirst is a devilish thing. Here had I been but a few hours without a drink, and already I was beginning to feel the torment of it.

But the water hole, if I remembered aright, was only about three hundred yards in a straight line from the churchyard bunker; and the tunnel I was in seemed, so far as I could judge, to be travelling in the direction of it. If that proved to be the case, water would assuredly find its way into the tunnel. I remembered Sir Charles saying that the water was supposed to possess valuable medicinal qualities; and I hoped that I should be able to sample it, and that it would prove a panacea for a broken head and strained ankle.

I calculated that the shore was only about seven hundred yards in a direct line from the bunker; and I could easily, provided the tunnel ran straight and there were no obstructions in it, reach either the water hole or the shore and get back again within the hour.

I travelled slowly and carefully, saving my ankle and torch as much as possible. I also kept a close

watch on the top and sides of the tunnel, looking for a possible means of escaping into the open, as well as for any side passages which might exist. I had no wish to lose my way. I came across one passage of which I took careful note. It joined in from my right hand—that is, from the south, so far as I could judge. The height of the tunnel at this point of junction was much lower, not more than four feet high. The sand was blowing past me the same way as I was travelling; and I noticed that it was very deep at the junction of the two passages.

It was just about six o'clock when I arrived at a place where the tunnel opened out into a regular cave, twenty feet or so broad and as many high. There was a stone wall, a wall built by man, I mean, at the far side of it.

But the construction of the cave did not interest me for the moment; for there, in the far corner, the black rock was shining wet.

My troubles—damaged hand, groggy ankle, throbbing head—were all forgotten as I ran across the cave and glued my mouth to the wet rock. There was quite a good trickle of water, and I quickly quenched my thirst.

"Well, thank Heaven for that," I said out loud; "I shall be able to stick it out now all right."

"Right!" said a hollow, booming voice quite close to me.

I was so startled that I nearly sat down. I flashed my torch round the cave. There was no one there; but there were three tunnels leading out of it.

"Who's there?" I sang out.

"There?" answered the voice.

"Damn it, it's an echo," I said.

"Cho," replied the voice.

I laughed and a horrid laugh answered me. It was a deep, booming laugh—the sort of thing that Jack-the-Giant-Killer must have heard once or twice in his career.

"Haw, haw," I laughed again.

"Haw," laughed the voice.

It was distinctly creepy, and though I knew it was only an echo, yet I felt a squirmy feeling all up my spine.

I hollowed out a little basin in the wet sand at the foot of the rock; and when this was full I indulged in a really luxurious drink.

Then I washed my head, wrist and ankle, the cold spring water freshening me up wonderfully.

If you have ever been all alone, in an unpleasant situation, such as I was now in, you will find you think aloud. Your voice serves as company, I suppose. So now I suddenly said, "By Jove, which way did I come in?"

"Come in," said the echo.

"Shut up," said I.

"Shut up," said the voice.

I laughed again, and the laugh replied. It really was very creepy.

However, this echo suddenly gave me an idea. It seemed to come down one of the tunnels leading out of the cavern—not the one that I had come by, but one of the others.

Now, what is it, I asked myself, that causes an echo? Well, a hollow place does. But to get a good echo, must that hollow place be completely shut in, or must it have an opening besides the one the echo comes from?

You see what I was driving at? If the hollow place must have an opening, then all I had to do was to find out which tunnel gave the echo, and go along down that one until I found the opening, and then climb out of it. If, on the other hand, the hollow place must be completely closed in, then I must take the tunnel that did not give the echo.

I cudgelled my brains on this abstruse problem. My drink had made me feel very much better, extraordinarily cheerful, almost light-headed, indeed, as if the water had been a potent spirit. Certainly this spring possessed valuable medicinal qualities. Not only were my hand and ankle infinitely better for the soaking I had given them, but my brain seemed to be working extra clearly. I felt that I could solve any problem. I would think out this one of the echo before I moved.

I have stood on a hillside, shouted, and heard an echo from the opposite hill. I recollected once playing on some links in Lincolnshire where an ordinary farm-house gave back a wonderful echo. I have bellowed into a jug for the amusement of a small nephew; my voice reverberated in it, but there was no echo, if I remembered right. If you shout down a well, is there any echo? I could not remember ever having shouted down a well. The idea of such a thing struck me as intensely humorous, and made me chuckle. The echo chuckled too; and this tickled me to such an extent that echo and I laughed at the joke until I, for one, felt quite weak.

When I had recovered my gravity I turned again to the problem. I wished I had shouted down a well—shouted down a well! With difficulty I restrained another outburst of merriment. However, it appeared clear that a completely enclosed space would not give an echo, and that one which had an opening somewhere would. But I felt uncertain about it. Why on earth had they never taught us anything about echoes at school? Why is it that everything they teach one at school is of no practical value? They had even tried to teach me to play the piano. Absurd! Echo and I had another laugh at this comical idea.

But now, to test my theory. I took another drink, and walked to the mouth of the tunnel

furthest from me. I shouted down it, and an answering shout came back. I went to the other passage and shouted down that. A very faint shout only came back. So the further tunnel was the one to tackle. Back I went to it and crawled along it, being careful to take the time; but I had not gone more than about ten yards when I came to a blank wall that blocked the passage altogether. My theory of the echo was clearly wrong. It must have been the blank wall which gave the echo. Of course that would be it. A wall would reflect sound as it would reflect light. Extraordinary how ignorant a full-grown man can be of natural phenomena to which, as it happens, he has never given a thought!

So back I came to the tunnel by the spring. I moved along it for five or six minutes and lay down to rest. While I was lying down I thought I could distinguish distant voices above the rustling of the sand.

I shouted. Then listened.

Yes, they were voices; but very faint. They sounded like women talking. They came down the passage. I was on the right road then to get help. What luck!

I pushed on again quickly. The noise I made drowned the voices, so I stopped every few yards to listen. They became louder as I went along; but they still sounded very distant and soft.

The tunnel became much lower as I progressed. No, it was not that; it was the sand which was much deeper. There was a strong draught blowing down it, too, the same way as I was going; and the sand was rustling softly along with me.

I came to a point where the floor of the tunnel dropped steeply, six feet or more. There must have been steps here once. I slid rather unexpectedly down the slope on my stern. The sand was deep, and the passage took a sharp turn at this place.

Passing round the corner the voices became very distinct. But they were very soft and low—as women's voices should be. Still I could hear them in spite of the noise I made in moving. I shouted, but the voices continued their conversation unmoved, though an echo in front of me gave back my shout faintly. I could distinguish three voices, all feminine. One of them, a very soft contralto, had a delicious, gentle laugh, which broke in now and then on the conversation. I called again. "Help me, please," I said.

"Please," said the faint echo close in front of me; but the feminine voices babbled on unconcernedly. They could not have heard me. "Why the devil do women talk so much when they ought to be listening?" I groaned to myself.

Were they by chance supernatural, fairy voices? I am not superstitious; but—well, I suppose the

darkness and the confined space were getting on my nerves; I began to think I might have blundered into a spectral world, or into an asylum of deaf people. Otherwise they must have heard me; they were evidently quite close to me. Or was I dazed and off my head? Then I suddenly remembered Sir Charles' yarn about the spirit voices—the "blood council," he had called it.

I lay there and waited. Then I pushed on again. I turned another sharp corner and reached another big cavern. I switched my light round it; there was nobody there. The tunnel continued on the opposite side of it, though it was rather silted up with sand. The voices came from the other side of the rock wall, to my left. I went to the point nearest to them, lay down and listened; then shouted again. My voice reverberated all round me, but the women took no notice. I did not like it at all. Who on earth could they be? Long-forgotten stories of fairies and witches, mermaids and vampires surged up in my memory. I remembered one devilish story of vampires, with a picture on the cover of the book of a man with bat's wings and canine teeth, crawling up the wall of a house, intent on getting in at a window and sucking somebody's blood. Were these beings vampires? Would they presently come out of their lair, fall on me and devour me? I half started to scramble back to the churchyard

bunker—to escape from the neighbourhood of these creatures! But what was the good of that? They would follow me. I lay still and listened.

There was a crack in the wall over my head about four feet up. I stood up and looked into it, though I half feared to be struck blind or have antlers fixed on to my head by outraged goddesses or fairies. I wondered vaguely what sort of antlers they would give me. Goat's horns, I thought ruefully; for what a goat I had been to tumble into that hole!

I turned my light in through the crack, which was two or three inches broad and ran right up to the ceiling of the cavern. My light shone through the crack, showing the rock wall of the cavern to be about two feet thick—what looked like a passage was on the far side of it, and the light showed up the further wall. It was, undoubtedly, a stone wall built by hands, on a granite foundation. Evidently I was in the buried village—the haunted village. These were certainly the spirit voices which Sir Charles had mentioned. I listened attentively to them again.

I could now hear the splash and murmur of running water. It was quite close to me, in the passage, on a level with my feet, I judged. But turn the light and crane my head as I would, I could not get a glimpse of it. For a moment I thought that this stream was responsible for the voices; but

they were quite separate and distinct from the sound of the water. No, they were clearly voices. They seemed to come down the passage, and sounded like women talking in a room with the door ajar—conversing while engaged with their needles. I tried hard to distinguish what they were saying, but could make nothing of it. Every now and then the conversation would cease, then continue; and that beautiful, gentle laugh would break in on it now and again. There surely could be nothing to fear from ghosts with such delightful voices. I wished that I could see them, especially the one that laughed.

I shouted again. No notice was taken. Yes, they were silent! Then they recommenced. Once more I shouted. No result. It was very weird. I felt my hair standing on end. Sir Charles had said, if I remembered right, that the beauty of these voices added to the horror of the cool-blooded business of these harpies.

As I stood there listening I became aware of a weird wailing which I had not noticed before, but which rose and fell with an infinite mournfulness. Now it would cease; again it would rise gradually to dominate the voices; then fade away till I could barely distinguish it.

I know nothing of music, though they tried hard to teach me as a boy. I even sang in the choir at church till my voice cracked.

But all I remembered of it now was the expression, "the dominant seventh."

I never knew what it meant, but had a hazy idea that it was some particular note which occurred from time to time, and which used to attract my attention. I muddled it with the minor key.

I had once been licked and kept in all one half-holiday for fighting; and I heard some one practising on a piano in the distance. One note kept recurring; and it sounded so like the lamentation of a lost spirit that it nearly reduced me, sore as I was in mind and body, to tears.

The pitiful wailing I now heard had much the same effect on me. It was in striking contrast to the voices. The latter, especially the soft laugh, sounded cheerful—but how callous! How could people—women too, apparently—laugh while that lost soul was wailing in its misery! I thought it must be the "miscreant lover," as Sir Charles had called him.

I built up a little platform of sand so as to raise myself up; for the crack widened out considerably above my head. By this means I managed to peer through and look up the bed of a little stream. The light of my torch disclosed a most beautiful spectacle. The little stream, like a silver streak, wound its way between great granite boulders which scintillated as though composed of innumerable diamonds. At one point the rocks glowed with a variety of colours,

amongst which greens and blues predominated, with, however, a tinge of dull red here and there. The effect was startling; for it gave one the impression of a conglomerate mass of precious stones—rubies, emeralds, opals—a fitting home for the beautiful fairy voices.

I tried to get my hand through the crack in the wall, so as to turn my light up and down the passage. That might attract attention. It was a difficult job for the crevice was small. I was horribly afraid also of dropping the torch into the passage. The idea of finding myself in pitch darkness in these tunnels brought out a cold sweat on me.

With the utmost care I wriggled my arm through the crevice and turned the light up the passage. I shouted again. No notice was taken; the voices babbled on unconcernedly.

After a minute or so I withdrew my arm, gripping the torch with infinite caution. I breathed more easily when it was out.

Now came the question of what I was to do. I put the voices out of my mind. They might be due to wind or water, fairies or vampires—they were evidently of no use to me. But in this I was wrong, as it proved.

Was I to explore further, or to return and try to make my way to the club house?

I was fairly certain that I was on the right road

to the sea. The stream on the other side of the wall told me that. But I remembered that Sir Charles had said that there was no outlet from these passages into the coast caves; and that these latter had all been explored when the last man disappeared. Still it might be possible to find a way out from the inside when one would never discover it from the outside. I could not be very far from the sea—not more than three hundred yards, I calculated—and I might as well carry on to the bitter end. It seemed absurd to suppose that a passage such as this would run right down to the coast and have no outlet at the end of it. The opening was probably hidden, overgrown with grass or filled with sand; but it would certainly be there right enough.

Of course I must go on. So on I went. I thought I would try to move in the dark to save my torch. I remembered, however, that these subterranean passages were supposed to be old mine workings. There were many caves half way up the cliffs, which were, as was well known, connected with mines further inland; and we had been told by an ancient miner that it was very dangerous to try and penetrate far up them, as one would come suddenly on a shaft, perhaps eighty feet deep—or eight hundred feet deep, I could not be certain which; but, anyhow, deep enough to give one a nasty bump if one should fall in! There

were, however, no cliffs to speak of near the links—just rocks thirty feet high or so, at the bases of the sandhills. So it was improbable, I thought, that I should find mine shafts in these passages. There was also the stream burbling close by the passage I was in; and I remembered that walking round by the rocks, as we had done that very morning, John and I had come across a brook running out of one of the caves. We had been obliged to clamber up the rocks to get across it, as the tide was high, the sea was swilling right into the mouth of the cave, and there was deep water close up to the rocks. So that if there were a mine shaft in my passage, it was certain that the stream would find its way into it and would not reach the sea above ground as it did. I decided therefore to chance it, switched off my light and crept along, feeling my way with the utmost caution.

After, perhaps, half an hour, the noise of the running water became, suddenly, very loud—as if a door had opened. I turned on my light and found that the stream had joined the passage—or, rather, that the passage had joined a big tunnel down which a stream was flowing.

The exit from the passage was small, about two feet square or so, and, being covered by a boulder, was hardly noticeable from the tunnel itself. The latter was big enough for two men to walk abreast. The floor was covered in places by patches of sand;

and my attention was caught at once by the fact that this sand was trodden.

It was clear that there had been quite a considerable amount of traffic over it—recent traffic too; for a footprint in the wet sand, close to the edge of the brook was even now filling gradually with water and still retained its clean-cut edges. It had been made by a heavy, nailed boot and was pointing up the tunnel.

I studied these footprints; for they made me feel suspicious. It was queer that Sir Charles had not mentioned this tunnel; he would certainly have done so had its existence been generally known. Yet, judging from its general direction, and the angle which it formed with the passage I had come down, it must surely run from the neighbourhood of the club house, under the links to the sea.

Another point struck me. The footprints had been made by two or three pairs of nailed boots, the owner of one of them evidently a big man with enormous feet. There was also a pair of boots or shoes with Phillips' patent rubber soles; and another pair of what I took to be tennis shoes. These footprints pointed both up and down the tunnel. The nailed boots showed deeper impressions on the inland journey. The obvious inference was that the men with the nailed boots were carrying weight inland.

My first thought was, naturally, that here was

the German submarine depot, and that they were still at their games. But why, then, should they be carrying stuff inland? If it were a submarine depot they would be carrying petrol and spare parts down to the coast—not away from it.

I studied the footprints again carefully. Yes, that was right enough. Those going inland were much deeper than those running seaward, at least so far as the heavy boots were concerned. The prints left by the tennis shoes and the Phillips' patents were, however, the same going either way. The men in heavy boots only were carrying weight. Then what were the other fellows doing?

I sat down at the junction of the two tunnels while I thought it out, ready, however, to skip back into the passage I had come down. For, as I figured it out on the spur of the moment, these were, probably, ordinary smugglers; and the yarns about ghosts and feminine blood-councils were all a blind to cover their operations.

I wondered if Sir Charles was in it.

Of course he was—the old scamp!

It made me chuckle to think how he had been pulling our legs, while all the time he was turning a dishonest penny with his wicked doings. I had no doubt that it was his special job to divert attention away from these underground passages.

Anyhow, one thing was clear: there must be an exit from this tunnel to the beach, probably

through the cave from which the brook issued. That was a blessing at all events. I would find my way out as soon as might be. I was rather fagged and sore and was in no mood to seek adventures just at present. Neither had I any particular wish to pry into what did not concern me in the least. As a matter of fact, like most men, I suppose, I sympathised to some extent with contraband traders—it would tend to reduce the extortionate prices one had to pay for the cup that cheers!

Besides that, the smugglers might quite well prove nasty customers if a stranger suddenly tumbled in amongst them.

On the whole, I would certainly get out of it as soon as possible; and I had better be smart about it for the smugglers might return at any moment. And I had better cover my tracks so far as possible, so that they would not know that a stranger had been there. John and I, if we felt that way inclined, could always return another day to investigate. It would be rather fun.

So I raked over the sand where I had been sitting and at the mouth of my little passage and stepped off down the tunnel, taking, however, careful note of the small entrance to my passage in case I might have to bolt back into it.

But what a joke we should have with Sir Charles! We could pretend to be confident that passages existed and see how he would try to disabuse our minds.

Laughing to myself at the idea, I hurried along, stepping quite briskly in spite of my groggy ankle and flashing my torch along in front of me from time to time to make certain that there were no pitfalls.

Nevertheless I moved cautiously, for the floor of the tunnel was rocky; and every time the toe of my shoes, which were shod with iron toe-caps, struck a rock, the sharp clink of it went booming and reverberating up and down the tunnel, advertising the fact that some one was walking down it. But I also had rubbers on my soles, and with a little care I was able to move quite silently.

The general line of the tunnel was fairly straight, and I thought it probable that it had originally been cut as a conduit to carry off surplus water from the mine.

Of course that's what the reopening of the mine Sir Charles had mentioned meant!—a smuggling business on a grand scale!

Or was this tunnel merely part of the mine workings, and the traffic in it simply part of the everyday work of the mine?

Yes, that would be the explanation. I had got hold of a mare's nest after all!

So I threw caution to the winds and walked along quickly.

There was not a steep fall in the bed of the stream; and I fancied I must be getting near the

shore. It was just about nine o'clock, however, before I reached yet another cavern which, as I saw and heard at once, was close to the sea. For I could now plainly hear the dash of the waves; while at the further end of the cave, swilling in under a rock wall that blocked the sea entrance, appeared every few seconds tiny wavelets which met and fought and forced their way up against the current of the stream. I watched this contest between sea and stream for, perhaps, half a minute; then switched off my light to look for the entrance. But all was pitch dark except one faint gleam which showed up in the roof.

I switched on my light again and turned it slowly round the cave.

There! Neatly arranged against the wall at one side was a stack of petrol tins. Close beside these was a pile of wooden cases.

So it was true, after all, that here had been one of the Bosche submarine depots.

I turned my light on round the cave—then, quickly, switched it off!

For in a corner, partially hidden by the wooden cases, was a man lying asleep—apparently.

I stood very still as I thought out the situation. What was I to do? All my suspicions were again aroused by the sight of the petrol tins; and I thought of the young sailor.

I strained my eyes to find the entrance to the

cave; but no glimmer of light could I see. The entrance would take some finding, evidently. Yet if I used my torch I would probably wake the fellow and there might be trouble.

I was in poor condition to put up a fight unless I could get a grip on the other fellow's throat with my sound hand. Besides he might be armed; and in that case, if I woke him up, he would be quite likely to let drive at me with a revolver and ask questions afterwards. He had probably been put here to guard the entrance and had fallen asleep. That entrance would therefore be close beside or behind him. There would be some trick in it too; for, according to Sir Charles, these caves had all been carefully searched at different times solely with a view to finding some such entrance. Still, if Sir Charles was in this swindle I could not, of course, believe a word he had said.

I looked all round, probing into the pitch darkness with my eyes, in the hope of seeing some vestige of light which would disclose the door of the cavern. But beyond a faint luminosity in the wavelets which rippled into the cavern, and the gleam from the roof, everything was pitch dark. Then I bethought me of the footprints. These would probably lead to the entrance. So down I went on my hands and knees and felt about for them. But I could make nothing of it in the soft sand. Perhaps a man who had been

blind from youth up might have been able to follow them with his sensitive fingers; but I could not.

Well, whatever I was going to do I must do it at once. The rest of the gang might be down on me at any moment; and it was better to tackle one man than half a dozen.

I would try to bluff him. If I switched on my light to look at the footprints, I would probably wake him up. Far better switch my light on into his face and bluff him or tackle him while he was still dazed with sleep.

I had kept careful note of my position in relation to those of the petrol tins and of the sentry. I was facing down-stream, which was on my left. The petrol tins were stacked on the far side of the stream to my left front. Close alongside of them were the long wooden packing cases; and beside these again were some smaller cases. Close to the smaller cases was the sleeping sentry.

I had no time to think. I turned to my left, stepped through the stream and crept across the few yards which separated me from the packing cases. I hit one of them with the toe of my boot. It gave forth a hollow boom which, in the silence, resounded like the crack of doom. I held my breath and stood like a statue. There was, however, nothing to be heard except the ripple of the stream, the wavelets and the distant wash of the bigger waves outside.

Then I felt my way along the cases towards the

sentry with my right hand, holding my torch in readiness in my left. I planned to flash my torch suddenly into the face of the sleeper; to go for his revolver if he had one and make him show me the entrance; or bluff him if he was unarmed, saying that I had been sent to wake him as Mr.—I had forgotten his name—was waiting outside to be let in.

I got to the end of the cases. I ought to be close to the sentry. My toe touched something which rattled slightly. I guessed where the man's face would be, and suddenly switched on my light.

It fell on a ragged tweed coat, and travelled rapidly up towards the place where the face of the sentry ought to be.

But there was no face; there was a grinning skeleton instead!

That was a pretty sort of anti-climax. It gave me a regular shock—far worse than if the man had been alive. I had worked myself up, you see, in readiness for all sorts of blood-curdling adventures; and here was nothing but a poor "deader"! I sat down beside it and gasped. It reminded me of a yarn I had heard of a fellow scouting in No Man's Land during the war. He suddenly saw by the light of a flare a rifle pointing at him from a shell hole close by, with a man's head squinting along the barrel. There was but one thing to be done. He jumped and landed with both feet on the head—of a corpse—and a three weeks' old corpse at that!

CHAPTER IV

JOHN SAUNDERSON'S NARRATIVE

I AM John Saunderson writing; and I am about to describe what occurred wnen my cousin Jack disappeared so mysteriously.

On the Saturday morning, after I had played my round with him, I walked back by the cliffs from the club to the hotel. The wind had dropped and it was dead calm. It was a glorious day, the sun shining through a light covering of filmy white clouds. These were all moving very slowly from east to west; but a lower stratum of dark ragged clouds was blowing up from the south-west.

I remember thinking that a change of weather was coming and that it would rain and blow before nightfall. I hoped that it would blow itself out before Monday; and I speculated, as I walked, on the differences the change of wind would make in the various holes.

There was that seventh hole, for instance, the churchyard hole—that would be a teaser in half a gale from the south-west. I could imagine how the

wind would swing round the church and put one's ball out of bounds into the churchyard if there was a vestige of slice on it, or into the churchyard bunker if one had anything of a hook.

But the beauty of the view very soon took my thoughts off golf. I delight in these panoramas of coast scenery; they would make me feel quite poetical if such a thing were possible.

The tide was out. There were long stretches of silver and golden sands with pools and outcrops of blue, green and black rock here and there. The pools were miniature or vast mirrors as the case might be, reflecting accurately, not only the rocks but the variations of sky, so that numerous exquisite topsy-turvy pictures lay scattered about below one's feet.

Further out the sea was rippling to the land in tiny waves. I stopped to watch them. One could see where they formed far away out in the blue. The first sign was a glimmer of translucent green which appeared in a long, sinuous line nearly, but not quite parallel to the shore. Slowly it approached, gradually becoming more pronounced, changing colour in the sunlight, glittering and glassy, flecked with a myriad minute diamond points which flickered into life and vanished.

Closer it rolled, increasing in size, and in one place and another rearing up a threatening crest as if it intended all sorts of terrible things, then tamely

subsided. Just when one was expecting these quite formidable-looking rollers to crash into life they sank into nothingness, resolved themselves into insignificant little ripples which had not a break in them and which merely swilled over the sands and into the pools shattering for the moment all my beautiful pictures. Now and then there was a little flicker of foam against a rock. That was all.

So will one see a dog approach another, glowering with ferocity, his jaw thrust out. Suddenly he stops and wags his tail genially.

But away at the point, two or three miles across the bay, a long ledge of rocks had appeared stretching in a great curve far out towards the horizon.

Look at that ledge! See the power of these ocean rollers! If you have a pair of field glasses, watch how each one submerges that end rock which must stand at least ten feet out of the water. Observe how it rolls along the ledge. Now watch it approaching that big rock, that thirty- or forty-footer. See how it sucks back the water from the base of it, exposing its very vitals and gathering strength for its blow.

Then the rush of green water, the smash, the hooroosh of foam!

What a glorious sight. I'd give anything to be a great painter to put that down on canvas, so that I could stand and gaze at it when in dingy old London!

I could spend hours simply looking at this ever-changing sea.

Even as I was watching the whole scene was being transfigured. The brightness had gone out of the day; the fleecy white clouds had turned grey and were thicker; the sun, with a luminous ring round it, was showing like a pale spectre; the scud of dark clouds from the south-west was travelling more rapidly; and this sea which but a minute before had appeared animated though tranquil, a vast thing of deep-bosomed, slow-breathing vitality, was now but a mere stretch of dull grey, all the sparkle and life of it vanished.

After all, it was only a mirror of the sky—just a "copy-cat" as Maude would say.

I am sorry for wasting your time and my own with my poor effort at word painting; but a sight of the sea always takes me this way.

Look at that sturdy, iron-bound, typically British coast, reserved, silent, watchful, gazing grimly at the sea, his coquettish and unruly mate, regardless of her moods, proof equally against her joyous dancing and light-heartedness, her frowns and her tears, her hysterical fury.

It always reminds me of a surly old gentleman married to a young and beautiful but skittish wife.

I dawdled back to the hotel, ate my lunch, wrote some letters, thought casually that Jack had evidently received his telegram and gone off to

Falmouth, picked up a "blood-curdler" novel about spies, made myself comfortable in the smoking-room and went to sleep. I woke up and had a dish of tea about five o'clock; then went for a walk afterwards. But it was beginning to rain, and getting dark, while a gale was blowing up from the south-west—so back I went to the hotel and to my "blood-curdler." The two girls returned in time for dinner, and we dressed and went into the dining-room. There we found Sir Charles and Baker about to appropriate our table. Baker was the man who had beaten Jack, playing level; and I looked at him with interest. According to Jack he was very hot stuff.

The usual explanations and apologies ensued; and we three sat down, while Sir Charles and his guest went off to find another table.

But presently it dawned on us that the room was full and that they were likely to feed standing up, or get no dinner at all. So, of course, we made them join us as, owing to Jack's absence, we could manage with a little squeezing. The hotel produced a bedroom chair, found the necessary knives and forks with, apparently, some difficulty; and we finally settled down to our grub. Sir Charles explained that his cook had suddenly fallen ill and that being so early in the season he had thought it unnecessary to warn the hotel people of his proposed advent. The manageress of the hotel, much

perturbed, explained volubly that there would have been ample room the night before; but that owing to the arrival of a large family that very afternoon—et cetera, et cetera. There was the family as large as life—about ten of them—and after taking stock of them, wondering who they could be and what they meant by descending on the hotel in such a fashion, we started on the usual topic of the weather.

We were all very much taken with Baker. He was a smart-looking chap, a good conversationalist, with a sense of humour, and had evidently knocked about the world. He spoke with a very slight Irish brogue, and also used many Americanisms; so that I judged he was an Irishman, or of Irish extraction, who had spent the greater part of his life in America. He was inclined to be silent at first, but Sir Charles and I drew him out very cleverly; and presently he began to talk, describing some lurid experiences in Bolivia, I think it was. He had also been up the Amazon, crossed the Andes and been mixed up in one or two revolutions at least. He laughed over these latter as if they had been huge jokes. He was a man of about thirty-five; and to look at him, well-groomed and well-turned-out as he was, with his nicely brushed black hair, pleasant features, smiling face, his white teeth showing from time to time as he smiled, one would have thought him the last man in the world to find pleasure in hobnobbing with revolutionary refuse. He looked to me to be too

soft for anything of the sort. Not physically soft by any means. On the contrary, though not a big man, slightly, even slenderly built, his figure was well-knit and athletic; and I could quite believe that Jack had not exaggerated when he said that this fellow had the most beautiful rhythmical swing both in playing golf and in walking that he had ever seen. I could imagine too that he would be a tough proposition in a rough-and-tumble. He would be like an eel; you would grip hold of him to find he was not there at all.

No, it was the man's eyes and mouth—the general expression of his face—which gave me the impression that he was ill-fitted to cope with some of the scamps and cut-throats with whom, according to his own account, he had consorted from time to time. His eyes were soft as the proverbial deer's—"large, luminous and dark, better fitted to melt with tenderness than flash with the light of battle." Please don't think that that is my own description. It comes almost word for word out of the "blood-curdler" in which I had been wallowing all day. But it really gives a very fair idea of the sort of eyes he possessed.

Then Margery had been greatly struck by the length of his eyelashes! Poor devil. He couldn't help it, I suppose.

There was another thing I noticed about him. When he smiled his teeth remained clenched. I

have only seen one other man in my life of whom that could be said: and he was a very tough nut.

The five of us were seated, rather squashed up, at a little round table: Baker between Maude and Margery; Sir Charles next to Maude; and I, myself, between Sir Charles and Margery. So that I was pretty well opposite to Baker. I had been watching him—sort of sizing him up in the way one does—and I had just noticed the manner in which he kept his teeth clenched when he smiled and was wondering whether he did it out of coxcombry to display the beauty of his teeth or whether it was some index to his character. I could not make up my mind; but he was certainly not at all self-conscious.

He, in his turn, was sitting looking at Margery with ill-concealed admiration. She is, of course, extraordinarily pretty; and there is no reason for astonishment that a man should find it difficult to keep his eyes off her. Still, it can be over-done. And he was more or less talking at her too—describing his experiences, primarily for her benefit—sort of Othello and Desdemona business.

But what did perplex me was that Margery seemed to enjoy it. She, I had hoped, would soon be engaged to Jack; yet here she was, if not indulging in a glad-eye contest, yet in something perilously akin to it. She had known him before—met him at a dance or two.

I suppose the best woman in the world can't resist playing a fish she has hooked, however little she may want to land it. It is the sporting instinct, I expect.

I also caught an amused glance which passed between the two girls. These two sisters were conversing with each other in an exasperating way they have without uttering a sound.

I fancy that it was with some idea of putting a stop to all this little by-play that I suddenly asked Baker if he had had much to do with mining. My question must have called him back to earth somewhat abruptly for he started slightly as he turned to me. The softness disappeared from his eyes as if by magic; and a wary, suspicious glint appeared in them just for a second while he studied my face. His glance passed on to Sir Charles as he replied that he had once tried his hand at silver mining in Mexico. I also turned to look at Sir Charles, whom I found smiling humorously.

"Why," said he, "Mr. Baker is concerned with the newly opened mine here. I should think he must know a lot about it."

"It doesn't follow," said Baker; "I deal with the financial side only."

This statement interested me vastly as a man of business; for I had thought that such a venture must swallow up a huge amount of capital; and I was keen to know who was behind it.

But Baker evidently did not wish to pursue the subject. It was he, in fact, who changed the conversation, sliding gracefully off into a story of, "That reminds me of a man I once knew who," et cetera, et cetera. His yarn made us all laugh and diverted our thoughts for the time being from the subject of mining.

Then we talked golf. I told him the flattering remarks Jack had made about his game and asked him how he had managed to keep in practice while wandering all over the world. He said he had learnt to play as a boy and had had many opportunities of playing since. He had, in fact, been playing steadily for the last few months in Ireland.

"Then you are Irish?" Margery asked him with interest.

"Dangerously so," he replied with a laugh and a glance which made Margery look down at her plate.

So we got on to the subject of Ireland. It was in everybody's thoughts at the time—that and the miners' strike.

I felt very strongly on the subject; for over and above the hatred we all felt for the systematic murder campaign carried on by the I.R.A., I was furious because a great friend of mine, a particularly nice boy who had served under me in France, had been taken and murdered in cold blood, and in devilish fashion.

Baker listened to my vituperation against such a method of carrying on war, his gentle eyes fixed on Margery.

I held forth on this topic for some little time until I saw Maude yawn indeed. That annoyed me slightly until I remembered that she had heard me say the same things pretty often before.

Baker seemed to take no interest in the Irish question whatsoever; and that rather astonished me, considering he was an Irishman. As, however, he was more or less my guest, I felt that I must introduce some topic of conversation which would interest him. Maude evidently thought so too; for turning to Baker she asked him if he had heard Sir Charles' yarns about the buried village.

He had not; so we induced Sir Charles to tell them again for his benefit.

Baker's curiosity was fully aroused when Sir Charles mentioned the whispers he had heard in the club when his poor friend had disappeared; and he asked several keen questions as to the nature of these whispers. Were they smothered cries? Did they give the impression of a man's voice, muffled as if he were shouting for help from underground?

No, Sir Charles said, they sounded as if a voice were whispering in his ear, quite close to him, so much so indeed that he turned his head expecting to find his friend immediately behind him. Sir Charles went on to explain his theory that it was

his friend's spirit which was trying to communicate with him.

I was astonished at the interest Baker now displayed in Sir Charles' theory. I wondered that a keen business man, such as Baker must surely be, should be interested and even excited, instead of merely amused, by what I regarded as pure childishness. We discussed the problem—if it could be dignified with such a name—at considerable length; and I wished that Jack had been present to support me in my purely materialistic views. For I was single-handed against them all. Sir Charles believed that it was the spirit of his dead friend; and Baker supported him. Maude and Margery, on the other hand, ascribed it to some form of intuition or telepathy, believing that Sir Charles' friend was *in extremis* and was calling for help.

I poured cold water on this latter idea; for there is rather more of this telepathy or intuition between these two sisters than I altogether like. I will, presently, give you instance of it.

So, from motives of what I might term high policy, I suggested, rather unfortunately, that the voice heard by Sir Charles was imaginary—the sudden shock of his friend's disappearance acting on a full stomach after a tiring day. (I did not, of course, put it exactly in those words.) As everybody knows there is nothing like worry after a heavy meal to play Old Harry with one's digestion and nerves.

Sir Charles was not best pleased with this idea I could see; he gave me, in fact, a somewhat malevolent glance; and I dare say he would have said something nasty, but that Maude intervened.

She turned the tables on me, mentioning that some spiritualistic fool of a woman, who had watched me practising golf on the sands one day, said she had seen an "aura" round my head. That, I understand, was as much as to say that I was a medium. Utter rot, of course. But as I, unfortunately, have reddish hair, I have never heard the last of it.

This yarn caused a general laugh at my expense and smoothed over my slight indiscretion. Sir Charles, indeed, laughed with more than his usual heartiness; but I pardoned him, not only because the idea is, in itself, sufficiently comic, but because it was but natural that he should wish to get a bit of his own back after my unfortunate remark.

Baker also was much amused, which rather annoyed me. So, to change the subject as well as to draw him out, I asked him, point-blank, his views on the Irish problem.

But he refused to speak. "No," he said, "these questions are too deep for me."

"But you, being Irish," I said, "must hold pronounced opinions on the subject."

"Not necessarily," he replied; "I know when I'm out of my depth."

"Did you serve in the war?" I asked him.

"Surely," said he.

At this moment Maude rose to lead the way out of the dining-room; and I had no opportunity to ascertain in what capacity he had served. For immediately afterwards he received a message; and he and Sir Charles said good-night and left.

The three of us, Maude, Margery and I, then discussed Baker at length.

It began in this fashion. I was yawning and made some banal remark about becoming more sleepy the more one slept. Then we decided to have breakfast punctually the next morning. After that we none of us spoke for two or three minutes. Maude was, I think, knitting, while Margery was sewing something or other. I was stretching myself and yawning.

Suddenly Maude said, "Yes, I think so too; he's a clever man—I like his eyes."

"Who's clever?—who's eyes?" I asked impatiently.

"Why, Mr. Baker's of course—Margery asked me," replied Maude.

Now I swear that Margery had done nothing of the sort; but that was the sort of thing I was constantly up against. These two sisters would converse without uttering a sound. One or other

of them would constantly answer a question which had never been asked. You will admit that it was most upsetting for a mere man. We would be talking about the weather, say. I would still be thinking about it. Suddenly one of them would reply, " Yes, but I don't like the way she puts on her hat." On that I would burst out and ask, " Whose hat ? " Then they would both laugh and explain that their thoughts had travelled from the weather, through the subject of muddy roads, to motor cars and what a pity it was we hadn't got one, thence to Mrs. Snook's car and how pretty she was, but they neither of them liked the way she put on her hat.

You see, a man simply can't compete. It's a sort of telepathy, thought-waves or intuition, they tell me.

The two girls were, of course, quite vanquished by Baker's good looks, charming manners and cultivated voice and conversation, to say nothing of the exciting experiences he had described.

I, on the other hand, while I liked the look of him well enough, except for his soft eyes—I never had any use for a man with soft eyes—thought that he had been bucking a bit too much. Maude, however, would have it that I had cross-examined him and that he had talked in self-defence, his object being to divert the conversation into such channels as suited him and avoid those, such as mining for instance, which might inconvenience him.

Maude, in fact, rather took me to task for badgering him with questions; and it is true enough that I had been anxious to know something about his venture in the tin mine. And why not? After all, it was a magnificent idea, if only because, if successful, it would find employment for numbers of miners who would otherwise be thrown permanently out of work. Why should he object to talk about it? A man who had thought of such a thing ought to have been proud of it. Then why should he glower at me when I told him my ideas for suppressing murder in Ireland? Was that also a forbidden subject with him? Maude thought that he glared at me because I asked him if he had served in the war; but I was convinced that the glare had come first—that, in fact, it was the glare which had made me ask the question.

Then I chaffed Margery a bit, telling her that the real reason of his annoyance was that my questions had distracted his attention from her; and that she really ought to be more careful and not make herself so conspicuous by her beauty. At that Maude pretended to take offence, wishing to know what the word "conspicuous" meant exactly.

All this is very small beer I know; but it is impressed on my mind by the events which were about to occur—which, indeed, were already in progress, had I only known it. I am merely trying to put you wise, as I believe they say in America—

as Baker would have put it—about our mental condition so that you may understand what happened later. The point is that we three were all very cheery, laughing, jesting and chatting as people will who are resolute to enjoy a long-projected holiday. At this time, you will see, we had not the very foggiest conception that Jack was in difficulties, in a very tight place indeed. Far from it, we imagined he had received his telegram and gone off to Falmouth to see his aunt; and that he would appear again some time on Monday afternoon.

We turned in about half-past eleven, rather later than usual, because, the next day being Sunday and therefore golfless, we should be able to enjoy a Europe morning.

When I woke up I found it raining and blowing great guns. The mask was fairly off the sea now; there it was leaping and lashing at the rocks as if it would tear the very vitals from mother earth!

We passed the day in a very lazy fashion. Maude and Margery started for a walk after lunch in spite of the weather; while I, interested in my "blood-curdler," made myself comfortable in an arm-chair and went to sleep. The two girls woke me up at four o'clock, clamouring for tea. They had not gone for their walk after all—it had rained too hard—but had gone to sleep instead. They now decided to go to church for the evening service if it

should clear up. It did clear up, and I walked with them as far as the club house.

Margery appeared to be a bit off colour; she was silent and abstracted. I chaffed her, assuming that it wasn't worth her while to make herself pleasant in the absence of both Jack and Baker and wondering which of the two was the favoured swain.

That made her flush up, and called forth a vicious verbal cow-kick from Maude, though what I had done to deserve it I don't for the life of me know.

Funny thing it is that women never can see when one is rotting. I suppose I must have done it rather well and made them think I was in earnest. Anyhow, Margery then talked nineteen to the dozen all the way to the club house.

CHAPTER V

THE FOOTPRINTS

JACK SAUNDERSON'S ADVENTURE

I WAS so utterly flabbergasted by the sight of the skeleton that I merely stood there and stared at it for, I should think, two or three minutes.

My first coherent thought was that this man must have been killed by the smugglers; that, consequently, they were by no means harmless individuals; that this was a very unhealthy spot for me; and that the sooner I found the entrance and cleared out, the better.

I ran round like a terrier after a rabbit; but no sign of an opening could I find. The footprints led to the point where the stream joined the wavelets; but these latter had washed them out for a space of three or four yards inside the cave. They gave no clue to the entrance; for the sand was everywhere kicked and trampled, especially so round about the cases. I felt along the bottom of the rock wall at the spot at which the stream joined the sea. The

former bifurcated, passing on either side of a rocky projection which rose from the floor and joined the wall itself. But the actual outlet of the stream, though about three feet broad on either side of the projection, was no more than two or three inches deep. A cat could hardly have got through.

There was a big oblong-shaped crack in the wall just above the projection. Putting my eye to it I thought I could distinguish the white froth of waves outside; but could not be certain. Anyhow, a cool draught came in through it. I pressed hard against this rock, thinking that it might, perhaps, be movable. But not a bit of it. Then it struck me that the entrance might be up in the roof. I turned my light up; and there, sure enough, was a big hole, very similar to the one through which I had fallen, but blocked, apparently, by a large flat rock. It was a good ten feet above me and there was no means of climbing up to it. Wait a minute though!

Why not build up a platform with the cases and the petrol tins?

Here was certainly an idea. But I should require an hour or two in which to get these cases into position; and, in the meantime, the smuggler people might come down on me. I must find out more about them and their habits before I attempted the task. I could not say how long it would be before they returned; so I would get

back quickly to the passage to the bunker and lie "doggo" there until they came past.

Before leaving I had another look at the skeleton. The clothes were of tweed; one could distinguish coat, knickerbockers and stockings. The sea air had preserved them from moth; but not from the depredations of sandhoppers or fish insects, or whatever they are called. The boots had gone. But the point of interest was that the man had been killed. There was a clean round hole drilled through his head which looked to me like a small-bore pistol bullet. Here was food for thought. The body was, quite possibly, that of the young sailor whom Sir Charles had mentioned. He had probably found this hoard of petrol and been killed for his pains. Then I remembered that Sir Charles had said that this sailor was searching the caves along the coast and that he suspected the existence of some such secret store as this. Being suspicious, he would hardly jump down ten feet into a cave with no possibility of retreat. That looked as though there was some other entrance, besides the hole in the roof, which I had failed to find. Why should I not wait here, hide behind these cases, and watch the smugglers when they returned? When they had finished their job, they would probably go out through the cave and disclose the entrance to it. That seemed to be my best, my only chance indeed, of ever getting out. If that failed, I could then

try to make my way along the tunnels which presumably led under the church or the club house or both and endeavour to make myself heard by shouting.

I looked round for the best hiding place. There could be no better one than the spot where the skeleton lay. It had been there certainly for months, perhaps for years. That showed that the smugglers never went close to it and that the entrance was not over against it. If I lay down in just the same position as the skeleton and removed my shoes, I might pass for it in anything but a bright light and a careful inspection. There was a projection in the wall of the cave which served to hide it from one side, while the stack of cases hid it more or less from the other. It was tucked away into a corner of the cave, indeed, just as though it had, originally, been chucked there to be out of the way. I wondered at first why the assassins had not thrown it into the sea ; but, on second thoughts, recognised that they had been wise. For the sea would, probably, have washed it up ; while inside the cave it was admirably hidden so long as the entrance was not discovered.

I decided on the exact position I would occupy ; and waited, taking off my boots. In the meantime I cogitated over it, being anxious to get some idea as to who and what I was up against.

This had, undoubtedly, been a German petrol

depot for submarines. Of that there could be no question. For what other possible purpose could petrol be brought to such a place as this?

I examined the cases, testing the weight of them. It was as much as I could do to lift one of the long ones. They were made of stout deal an inch and a half thick, the corners clamped with iron. There was no lettering of any sort on them. The smaller cases were similarly constructed; but were much lighter.

These cases might contain anything—liquor, rifles, ammunition, bombs, explosives for the mine—anything. I was no nearer a solution of the mystery.

Should I break open one of the cases?

There were plenty of big rocks lying about with which I thought I could smash one.

But if the smugglers came back and found a splintered case, they would seek round for the cause of it; and I should find it difficult to explain my action or to maintain my standpoint that I was no spy but had merely lost myself in these underground passages.

No, certainly, I could not afford to break open a case.

Besides, for all I knew to the contrary, this cavern might be merely a storehouse in connection with the newly opened mine.

Of course. That was it. And these cases probably contained explosives.

Why had I not thought of that solution before ?

Then I remembered the skeleton.

How account for it ?

The smugglers, or whoever they were, must know of its existence. If everything were plain, honest dealing, they would have reported it. There would have been a public funeral. The discovery would have been a nine days' wonder ; and the countryside would have been ringing with it.

Were the Germans still at their games ? Having failed in their great effort, were they now introducing weapons into the country ? There could only be one possible purpose in so doing ; and that must be to work up a revolution. Or, perhaps, the Germans were not now mixed up with the business at all. The general belief was that they were still pursuing their old tricks and were now trying to ruin us industrially, using Bolshevism and Communism as their instruments. It looked very much as though there must be something in that surmise ; for, supposing these were revolutionaries, how could they have discovered the existence of this cave and tunnel unless they had been told of it by the Germans ? Of course, the whole world was apt—too apt, perhaps—to saddle the Bosches with every piece of dirty work that occurred anywhere ; but they had only themselves to thank for it ; and, after all, things did look fishy in this particular instance.

There was, certainly, the possibility that the local inhabitants knew of this place. But, in that case, this was just ordinary smuggling; and these were not rifles and ammunition. But then, how account for the petrol?

Now whether these people were smugglers or Bosches or revolutionaries, their first idea would be to keep this secret haunt to themselves. Smugglers might be prepared to accept my word that I would not give them away, especially if I promised to grease their palms. But any of the other categories would knock me on the head as soon as look at me. There would be little or no risk attached to it; for my disappearance would be ascribed to the usual thing—a fall from the cliff—and would be accompanied, doubtless, by a more or less perfunctory search for my body.

I had barely come to this conclusion when I saw a dim light shining on the far wall of the cave. It looked to be that of a lantern; for the light was dancing about and was not bright enough for an electric torch.

A minute later I heard the reverberation of the click of a hob-nailed boot on rock, followed by an oath.

I was down in an instant in my place, peering under the crook of my elbow and hiding my face and hands lest they should show up white in the shadow.

I saw three men come into the cave, the leader

carrying a lantern ; but I could not see them clearly and did not dare move to get a better view. In a moment they were out of my sight, hidden by the cases. But from the noise I judged they were taking up one of the long boxes.

" A box of cartridges too," said one of them.

A heavy footstep sounded on the rock quite close to me and one of the small cases was lifted off. Fortunately I was in the shadow and the man did not see me. I heard the box of cartridges dumped down on what I knew now, for a certainty, to be a case of rifles—or pistols, perhaps.

" How many more journeys, mister ? " said a surly voice.

" Three more," replied another.

I heard a man clear his throat and expectorate loudly.

" It's a dawg's life," said the first voice.

No more was said ; and a minute later I watched the three leave the cave, going up the tunnel by the way they had come.

I had learned nothing about the entrance.

The moment they disappeared I put on my shoes with the intention of following them. Then I changed my mind. I should have about an hour, I calculated, before they would come back again; and I thought I would bathe my head, wrist and ankle in the salt water. I watched at the mouth of the tunnel until the light had completely dis-

appeared; then set to work to wash my cuts and bruises. I devoted about a quarter of an hour to the business; then made a thorough and very careful examination of the cavern.

But I could discover no entrance except the one in the roof. There was no ladder—no rope ladder even that I could find. Then these cases must have been lowered into the cave by a rope; and either they must open the entrance from outside, or bring a ladder down the tunnel. They probably did both. The cases must have been brought by sea—by submarine?—or landed in boats from a ship? I did not know enough about the coast, or submarines for that matter, to say whether it was, or was not possible for a submarine to come close in. In any case the point was of no importance to me in my present circumstances. The great thing was to find my way out without alarming the smugglers. The only facts I had discovered so far were that these were, indeed, rifles and ammunition which were being taken inland and that the smugglers would make three more journeys down to this cave. Evidently there must be an exit at the inland end of the tunnel. The question was, should I stay where I was on the chance that they would go out of the cave entrance; or should I follow them up the tunnel and try to escape by the inland entrance?

Well, suppose they brought a ladder back with them, I certainly would not get a chance to follow

them up it without their knowledge. I should be obliged to disclose myself. Then what would happen?

The inland entrance was the one to try. The thing to do was to get back to the bunker passage, lie up there, let them pass down to the cave; then follow them on the return journey. If I could find the inland entrance and escape by it, well and good. If not, I could then return to the cave after their third journey and try my plan of piling up the rifle cases so as to reach the hole in the roof. If this also failed, and supposing I were not caught in the act, I could make my way back to the bunker cavern—thence, if possible, to the church or the club house and try to make myself heard by shouting. In the last resort only would I give myself up to the smugglers and throw myself on their mercy. For I was under no delusions as to the outcome of this last course. Men who import weapons secretly are not the sort who hesitate to knock a man, presumably a spy, on the head.

With these thoughts urging me I pushed along pretty fast up the tunnel so as to get into the bunker passage before the smugglers came back. I was none too soon either; for as I went down on my hands and knees to go into my passage, I heard voices booming along the tunnel. I lay still, listening and watching. A faint light appeared; and peering round the corner I saw a man with a

lantern coming round the bend in the tunnel. As he came closer I drew in my head and retreated a couple of yards up the passage so as to be beyond the circle of light. I heard footsteps, the metallic ring of nailed boots on rock, and the soft thud of rubber soles. The next moment three men passed me, the leading man carrying the lantern. He was slightly built, walked with a light, springy step and was wearing tennis shoes. I could not see his face or the upper part of his body as they were in the shadow cast by the metal top of the lantern. The two men following him were of rougher build and dress. They walked with a slouch, shoulders rounded and hands hanging in front of them. In the bad light I could not see their faces, but could just make out that they were bearded, while the leading man, I thought, was clean-shaven. I received the impression that the leading man was the chief and that the two following were carriers. And this impression was instantly confirmed, for the two were grumbling, and as they passed me, were called to order rather sharply by the leader. He stopped and turned. "The work's got to be done," he said, "and that's all about it; so the sooner you stop your back chat and get through with the job, the better."

That was all; and they passed on down the tunnel.

I did not follow them; there was always the possibility that others might be coming along

behind. It was, however, fairly obvious that they were going down to bring back one of the cases; and the chance that they would open and so disclose the entrance to the cavern was very remote. So I decided to stay where I was and await their return. Neither had I long to wait; for in about half an hour they reappeared. It was as I thought. The leading man was still carrying the lantern, and holding it so as to throw the light behind him for the benefit of the others. The other two were carrying a long case, with a small one on the top of it, between them. It was a heavy weight to carry any distance; but both of them were powerful men, broad-shouldered and burly, though somewhat short in stature.

As they arrived just opposite me they dumped down the cases and stood blowing and wiping the sweat off their brows. It was hot and fuggy in these underground passages, and there was but little draught in this main tunnel. The two men stood there in full view of me for the better part of a minute. The third man, the leader—the one with the lantern—had passed beyond the corner, and I could not see him. But judging by the light, he also stood still. Suddenly he spoke. "Come along," he said, "we can't wait here all night." His voice was smooth and even; but something in the inflexion of it told me that his temper was near the breaking point. The two navvies, or

rather miners—for I had served in a company of pitmen in the war, and there is no mistaking them once one knows them—picked up the cases without a word, but with a surly air which I knew well. They were labouring under a sense of injustice—that much I knew as well as if they had said so in so many words. My heart warmed to them—fine, resolute fighters as they are, cheery and light-hearted in hardship and danger, with a childlike faith in a trusted leader, but obstinate as mules, savagely obstinate, if once they think they are being unfairly treated. And this chap in the tennis shoes had got on the wrong side of them somehow.

They moved off, and very cautiously I followed them. I would have disclosed myself to these miners without hesitation had they been alone; but I was doubtful of the third man. It would be as well to find out more about these people before I gave myself away.

As a matter of fact, I had an intense desire to give myself up to them—anything for human companionship. This creeping and crawling in the pitch dark was getting on my nerves. Even the light of their lantern cheered me, and I had to exercise great self-restraint to avoid going too close. I wanted to be with them, to talk to them, to hear the sound of my own voice in ordinary conversation.

But there were one or two queer things in this business which made me very suspicious. To

begin with, many miners—or so I had read in the papers—had joined in with the red republicans and revolutionaries. It was said that the "Red Army," which was in process of being formed, was largely recruited from amongst them. Then there were the rifles or pistols and ammunition. For what purpose, except revolution, were these being imported? Where were they brought from?—Germany? It looked like it. For there was the petrol—and this tunnel—and the skeleton.

No, most certainly I would not surrender myself until I knew more about these people.

These were mine workings, of course; probably those of the disused mine which had lately been reopened—reopened by Bolshevists, with German money behind them. Of course, that would be it. As I crept along, keeping just within sight of the dim glimmer of the lantern, I kept a sharp look-out for possible hiding-places. In a few yards I came to a point where the stream issued in a little waterfall from a hole in the rock in what I believed to be the south side of the tunnel. Thereafter we climbed steadily uphill though the gradient was gentle. But after about a quarter of a mile, as I estimated, the slope became more pronounced. I halted for a minute, as I was rather close to the people in front of me.

Then I pushed on again quickly to catch up with them, only to find that they also had stopped to

rest. They were talking, but I could not get close enough to hear what was said. I could, however, see the two miners bending down towards the walls of the tunnel, and wondered what they were doing. At last they took up their burden and moved on. When I came to the place where they had halted, I found a small stream which crossed the tunnel at right angles. It emerged from and ran into small passages which had evidently been cut for it. I thought at the time that it must be the same stream as the one we had left, or perhaps another branch of it, as it entered the tunnel on my right hand and flowed to the left. I examined the two passages, getting down on my hands and knees and feeling as far as I could reach. The one to my right was too small for me to squeeze into; but the one to my left was larger. Up above it, moreover, there was a fissure in the wall. Feeling inside, I was convinced that there was a hollow of sorts; and I thought it well worth while to investigate thoroughly. I pulled out my torch, and with my head inside the passage, turned the light on. Sure enough, about a yard inside the passage widened out; and with a little wriggling and squeezing I got into it. Here I found I could stand upright; and by climbing on to a small projection of rock could even see into the crack in the wall, though whether I could get a view of the tunnel was doubtful. Anyhow, it was an admirable cubby-

hole which, in emergency, might well serve as a good hiding-place. Extremely pleased with this discovery, I wriggled out again, and followed on the track of the smugglers. But I had lost time in this exploration; and I was obliged to go slowly as I did not know the ground and dared not use my light. I must have walked nearly half a mile before I saw the glimmer of light in front of me; and then it was approaching me. There was nothing for it but to turn round and hurry back. I decided to lie up in my cubby-hole and let whoever it was go past me. The man with the light was coming along quickly, and I was forced to run to gain the time in which to get into my hiding-place. Fortunately the floor was sandy, and I was able to run noiselessly. It was lucky; for the reverberations of even the slightest noise might have given me away. Presently I came to the stream, and dived head foremost into my hollow, climbed on to my ledge, and glued my eye to my spy-hole. Sure enough, I very soon saw the light shining on the far wall of the tunnel. It was the same party that I had been following, and they were, doubtless, bound on the same errand as before. I decided to let them pass, then make my way up the tunnel and try to escape by the inland entrance to it. I could then warn the police, who, if they were smart, might make a good haul.

As the leading man of the three passed me he

stopped. Turning and lifting his lantern, he called to the other two to hurry. The light fell full on his face. I was able to study it. Dark hair and eyes, aquiline features, dressed in light-grey clothes and wearing knickerbockers and tennis shoes. His nose and lips betrayed him; he was a Jew.

An instant later he and his companions had gone past; and I, scrambling from my cubby-hole, set off up the tunnel.

Yes, that was it!

These rifles were intended, without the very least doubt, for the Red Army. The Bolsheviŝts had, as everybody knew, been working, "according to plan" for a long time past, organising strikes to ruin industry, increasing the number of unemployed, confident that starvation and misery would, in the end, bring revolution in their train. In this they were succeeding only too well. Their chief difficulty was to obtain weapons. And these were finding their way into the country, slowly but surely. Everything pointed to the inference that here was one of the secret avenues by which they were introduced.

I was sparing in the use of my torch, reconnoitring a stretch of the tunnel for as far as I could see. And this, not only for the reason that I wished to husband my light, but because I never knew when I might come to the end of my journey, or whom or what I might find there. It was this necessity

for reconnoitring which nearly ruined me. I had passed two small tunnels running away to the left off the main one. These were close together, not more than five or six yards apart. I stopped for a minute to look down them as far as I could. The first one trended back the way I had come, that is, in the direction, so far as I could judge, of the club house; the other trended forward in an inland direction. I made up my mind at the time that if forced to bolt by one of these I would, if possible, take the one most likely to lead to the club house. Having taken this decision, I switched on my light to take a look at the next stretch of tunnel. Whether I had grown careless or was somewhat abstracted, thinking of the possibility of finding people in front of me and of having to hide, I know not, but I turned on my light before I came to a slight turn in the tunnel which was just ahead of me. I heard an exclamation, and switched off my light on the instant. But it was too late.

"Hullo, what's that?" said a voice.

"What's up?" asked another.

"They can't have got back yet," said the first voice.

"Who?" asked the second.

"Why, the carrying party."

"The carrying party? No, of course not," said the second man. "They've only just gone; they won't be back for an hour or more."

"Well, I saw a light down the tunnel," said the first man.

The voices sounded some distance off, and a very faint glow shone on the rock wall at the turning just in front of me. I crept towards it very cautiously, so as to look round the corner. But I was careful not to put my head round, as I judged from the dead silence that both men were standing staring in my direction.

"There ain't no light there," said the second voice presently. "Your eyes 'as misled you, Mr. Soolivan."

"I s'pose so," replied Mr. Sullivan; "yet I could take my davy I saw it—I happened just to be looking in that direction."

"Well, there ain't nothink there now," said the second voice, with, as it seemed to me, a slightly contemptuous intonation. No more was said, but I heard heavy breathing as though men were moving heavy weights. Very cautiously I went down on my knees, pulled my hair, which fortunately was rather long, as far over my forehead as it would go, and looked round the corner. About ten yards away the tunnel opened out into a large chamber, from the top of which a shaft of light shone as though a trap-door were open in the roof. There was also a ladder fixed against the wall. A few yards closer to me was a stable lantern on the ground. Two men, standing in the shaft

of light from the ceiling, were fixing a pulley round one of the long cases, which they had evidently just hauled into position. Even as I watched, one of them whistled, the rope tautened, and the case, swaying backwards and forwards, rose slowly and disappeared towards the roof. A creaking sound told me that they had a winch at work up above. But a man standing nearer to me than the others was of more immediate interest. He was close beside the lantern; he was gazing in my direction; and he held in his right hand what looked very much like an automatic pistol. I remained without movement, holding my breath, and watching him with my eyes half closed, fearing lest the light of the lantern shining on them might reveal me. Suddenly he reached down and picked up the lantern, still keeping his gaze fixed in my direction. Very slowly I withdrew my head, rose to my feet, and moved down the tunnel, feeling along the wall for the entrance to the two passages. But I kept my head turned, watching the light on the rock wall. It grew brighter quickly. The man was coming towards me. I reached the nearer passage, and bolted into it only just in time to avoid the light of the lantern. I felt my way along it, and found to my great relief that it took a sharp turn to the left. Here I pulled up, and switched my light up the passage for a fraction of a second to see if there was another turn. There

was, just a few yards on. So now I felt that I could lead my pursuer a bit of a dance if necessary, and could therefore afford to watch him. The light of his lantern shining on the wall of the main tunnel showed me that he was standing still—then that he was moving on. As he came to the opening of my passage I drew back my head and cleared off to the next turn. Judging by the light, he stood at the entrance of my little passage and looked into it. He then apparently moved on to the next passage and examined it. But he could not have gone into it, as I heard his footsteps repass a minute later. He stood there, however, for over twenty minutes. Finally he moved off.

Confound him! He had wasted good time, and I began to fear that the carriers would be back before I could get a chance of escaping. I crept back to the entrance of my passage as the light of his lantern faded, and watched him as he turned the corner of the main tunnel. Watching the light of his lantern on the wall, I followed and took up my original position on my hands and knees, peering round the rock wall. The man with the lantern walked up to the other two.

"Well, did you find anything?" asked one of the other two, drawing his shirt-sleeve across his brow as another case of rifles swung slowly up to the ceiling.

"No, there's nothing there," replied the man with the lantern."

"In course there ain't," said the man in shirt-sleeves, "but you 'as a 'abit of seein' things in the dark."

His comrade, also mopping his head with his shirt-sleeves, laughed.

"What do you mean by that?" asked the man with the lantern, angrily.

"No offence, mister; no offence. I only means as 'ow anyone could see you ain't no miner."

"No, I'm not a miner, thank God," the man with the lantern replied. "Give me the light of day, where a man can see what he's doing. When the real business begins," he added, "we'll show you underground worms what courage means."

"Hullo!" I thought to myself, "there's trouble brewing here too."

The two men in shirt-sleeves were handling another case of rifles. They fixed the rope; one of them whistled, and the case swung aloft.

"As to that," said the miner, turning suddenly on the man with the lantern, "I specks as 'ow I knows as much about real fighting as you do. I did my four years in France, honest fighting—none of yer dirty murder—cuttin' off gels' 'air—shootin' wounded men—twenty to one——!"

"Chuck it, Ginger—shet your silly 'ead!" exclaimed his comrade in shirt-sleeves, laying a heavy hand on the miner's shoulder.

But the miner was wound up. "Grr," he

growled, "if it worn't for the likes of this chap I wouldn't be in this dirty game. No"—he turned again on the man with the lantern, clenching and unclenching an enormous fist—"I'm not set on this underground work neither, though I be a underground worm—underground worm!" he repeated, moving a step towards the man with the lantern.

The latter jumped back a couple of yards. "Get on with your work," he snarled, "or it'll be the worse for you!" He raised his right arm.

"Shoot me down like a dorg, would yer?" said the miner, moving forward.

"Just that," replied the man with the pistol.

Now was my chance. I should never have a better opportunity, and I might save the miner. The man with the pistol had his back turned to me. I sprang towards him, but my game leg made me slow. I was too late. The pistol spoke; the miner threw up his arms and crashed to the ground.

"You skunk!" I exclaimed, and I hit the man with the pistol with all my force on the side of his jaw as he turned on me. He went down without a sound, squirmed once or twice, and lay still. I picked up the pistol mechanically, and stepped across to the miner. But he was quite dead. The bullet had caught him just below the chin, and had literally torn out his throat. An expanding bullet! What a skunk! I turned the pistol on

the man I had hit, and really believe that I would have shot him then and there but for the interference of the other man in shirt-sleeves.

"I don't know who you might be, mister, but you'd best clear off the way you come."

"You'd better clear out with me—now, at once," I urged him, moving towards the ladder.

But the man shook his head and laughed harshly. "There's a dozen on 'em up there," he said. "We'll never get through—they're armed."

He spoke the truth, for I heard several voices up above talking; and a man's head appeared at the trap-door. "What's up down there? Who fired that shot?" he asked.

I had jumped back into the shadow on seeing the head. "Get out o' this," the miner whispered to me hoarsely. Then he said aloud, "There's bin a scrap down 'ere between Mister Soolivan and Ginger Thomas, and Mister Soolivan's shot Thomas —killed 'im dead."

"What's that?" the man up above exclaimed, and he began to come down the ladder, while three or four more heads appeared at the trap-door.

Well, there was nothing for it. Either I must let drive with the pistol in my hand at the man coming down and fight my way through the lot of them, or I must bolt into my hiding-place and trust to finding some other means of escape. I think I should have fought for it but for the miner. He

moved towards me and whispered urgently—"Clear off." That decided me. The man coming down the ladder was filling the trap and impeding the view of those up above. I stepped close to Sullivan and laid the pistol by his right hand; for it flashed across me that if I took it away I should incriminate the man in shirt-sleeves. Then I faded away into the shadow, ran down the tunnel, and took cover behind the turning. Here I knelt down and watched and listened, looking behind me every few seconds to guard against being surprised by the party which had gone down the tunnel and which might return at any moment.

From this "O-pip" of mine I was able to watch everything, and even to hear what was said. I half expected that the miner would give me away; but I misjudged him sadly. Two men came down the ladder. Both of them were dressed in tweeds; one of them wore a Homburg hat cocked at an angle over one eye. He appeared to be the leader. He walked up to Sullivan, picking up the lantern as he went. He appeared to take but little interest in poor Thomas, who was lying there in a great pool of blood, which was slowly trickling over the rocky floor towards the tunnel.

"How did this happen?" he asked curtly of the man in shirt-sleeves as he examined Sullivan.

"I don't rightly know," replied the man; "my back was turned to 'em."

"But you must have heard something."

"They 'ad words, but I wasn't listenin'—then I 'eered a oath an' the shot was fired."

"The oath came first, did it?"

"I couldn't be rightly sartin o' that."

"H—m," said the man in the Homburg hat, thoughtfully, looking from the figure at his feet to the man in shirt-sleeves. He reached down and picked up the pistol, which he examined and put in his pocket. The other man who had come down with him also stood gazing at the man in shirt-sleeves.

"Now, look here, my man," said he of the Homburg hat finally, "Mr. Sullivan here has been knocked out by a smack on the jaw. A blow such as that would drop him in his tracks. Are you certain he wasn't hit after he had fired the shot?"

"I don't know nuthin' more nor what I've said," replied shirt-sleeves doggedly; "I don't 'old with this 'ere cold-blooded murder."

Homburg hat laughed shortly. "You don't 'old with it, don't you? All right, my friend," he said. "Mr. Sullivan here will be able to tell us all about it in another ten minutes or so." He walked up to shirt-sleeves, and stood in front of him, hands behind his back, looking at him. Sullivan lay without movement on the broad of his back, arms spread out on either side of him. I hoped to God that I had killed him, but feared

that he was merely knocked out—unless, indeed, he had a weak heart.

"Are you quite sure that you yourself didn't hit Mr. Sullivan after he had shot that chap there?"

It made my blood boil to hear the callous reference to "that chap there"—what a crew!—what stinkers! Why, damn it! a man would display more sympathy for a mad dog he had killed!

"S'welp me," replied shirt-sleeves, "I didn't 'it 'im. D'you s'pose, if I'd 'it 'im I'd 'ave left 'im alive to give me away—or that I would 'ave stopped 'ere?"

"H—m—there's something in that," said the man in the hat. It was evidently an argument that appealed to him. "Very well, my friend," he continued; "we'll leave it at that until Mr. Sullivan comes round."

I was, as you may imagine, keen to hear what Sullivan would have to say about it, but I heard a sudden noise which sent me back to hide in my passage. It was the booming sound of a wooden case hitting against the wall of the tunnel. As I ran down the tunnel I saw a light shining on the wall, and I bolted into the first of the two passages. From this point I watched the carrying party return with a case.

They passed me, the slim man in knickerbockers, the Jew, with a lantern, leading. I crept to the

mouth of the passage to watch them. The man in the Homburg hat met them at the corner of the tunnel. He and the Jew stopped behind while the carriers went on into the cellar with the case. I could not hear what was said; they were whispering. But it was evident that the situation was being explained to the Jew. Then the latter spoke out loud. "They are mutinous dogs," he said; "we shall have to give them a lesson."

On hearing him speak in this fashion I think I must have spoken out loud. Anyhow the man in the hat turned sharply with a "What's that?"

"What's what?" asked the other.

"I thought I heard some one speak."

"No; there's no one there."

The two stared for a moment, then walked away up the chamber. I followed cautiously to my post at the corner. The man in the hat and the Jew were still talking, both with their backs turned to me. He who had come down into the cellar with the man in the hat was leaning down over Sullivan, who was sitting up. Shirt-sleeves was standing at the further side of the cellar doing nothing. The two men who had carried up the case had lashed it into the pulley, and were steadying it as it was hauled up. They had their faces turned in my direction, and were staring at the dead body of their comrade. Their faces were working, and I thought they were cursing softly to themselves.

It was the Jew who spoke when the case had disappeared, and he had a pistol in his hand.

"Go on up, you two," he said—"no," he continued as shirt-sleeves stepped towards the ladder, "you stop here."

The two carriers, casting a final look at the bloody figure lying on the floor, climbed the ladder without a word and disappeared. At a whispered word from the Jew, the man who had been attending to Sullivan followed them. He was gone a few minutes. He then returned, and the trap-door was shut after him.

"Come here, Bates—stand there," said the Jew.

Shirt-sleeves stood where he was directed. His back was to the wall and he was facing me. The three other men grouped themselves round Sullivan.

"Now, tell me about it."

"About what?" asked shirt-sleeves

"Who hit Mr. Soolivan?"

Then shirt-sleeves told his story again. It was substantially the same as that he had told to the man in the hat. There was, however, one small discrepancy.

"You mean to say you saw nothing of it?"

"Nuthin' at all."

"And you heard nothing, either?"

"Nuthin', except the shot and the oath."

"What was the oath?"

"I didn't take no notice—there's plenty of oaths flying about 'ere."

"But you must know what it was?"

"No, I didn't take no notice."

"Then how do you know it was an oath?"

"Well, 'e said skunk, or dirty skunk, or somethin' like that."

"Ah, he said skunk, did he? Who said that?"

"I don't know nuthin' more about it."

"And then you heard the pistol-shot?"

"No, the shot come first."

The Jew turned round to the man in the hat with a gleam of teeth. He was smiling. Sullivan was sitting up and beginning to take notice. Shirt-sleeves wore an air of dogged resignation. He recognised, I think, that he had given himself away to these cut-throats and that he was doomed. But I saw his fist clench and unclench, and he moved a short step closer to his judges. Unless I was mistaken, he meant to put up a fight. I also moved round the corner. I wished I had kept the pistol.

"Now, Soolivan," said the Jew, "tell us all about it."

Sullivan, still half dazed, could only remember that he had shot Thomas for mutiny, and had been knocked out immediately afterwards.

"Any idea who hit you? Was it Bates?"

"No, it couldn't have been Bates"

"Why not?"

"Because he was away to my left, and the man who hit me came at me on my right hand. I remember now—he called me a skunk, and I turned on him and he hit me."

"So there must have been some other fellow down here besides you three?"

"Yes, there was."

"And Bates there did not see him—had his back turned to you?"

"No, that's a lie. Bates was facing me the whole time—why, I remember him telling Thomas to shut his mouth and not be a fool."

Again there was a gleam of white teeth as the Jew turned to smile at the man in the hat; he was evidently proud of his cross-examining powers.

A whispered conference ensued between the man in the hat and the Jew, while the miner stood looking from one to the other.

"Now, Bates," said the man in the hat in his turn, "you'd better make a clean breast of it—unless you tell us everything you know, you'd best begin to say your prayers. Who was the man who hit Mr. Sullivan?"

There was no answer.

The name "Bates" struck a chord in my memory. Where had I known a chap called Bates?

The manner of the man in the hat changed.

He stepped forward to within a yard of Bates, and stood there, a pistol in his hand, and his head thrust forward.

"Do you understand?" he asked with a vicious rasp in his voice. "Who hit Mr. Sullivan?" There was no answer; and he continued in what seemed a burst of fury, "I know you pitmen—a mutinous crew!—obstinate mules! You think because you can dictate to the old women of this country, you can boss us up too! You're wrong! We'll teach you the difference!—you've taken on with the Red Army now!—And, by God, we'll make you——!"

He didn't finish the sentence. He was asking for it! And he got it!

I could imagine his sneering face. It was too much for Bates anyhow. The latter stepped back a short pace, then, without a word, swayed forward and swung his huge right fist. It caught the man in the hat fairly on the side of the head—the crack of it resounded like a pistol-shot—lifting him clean off his feet. The pistol flew out of his hand, exploding harmlessly in the corner; his hat jumped into the air, twiddling round and round, while the man himself, pitching on to his shoulder, turned over like a shot rabbit and lay still.

"One of them down and out," I thought jubilantly as I rushed yelling into the arena.

The Jew had pulled out a pistol and was levelling it at Bates, but at my yell he turned on me and let it off wildly, throwing up his left arm with the idea of guarding his face.

I knocked up his pistol hand and hit him in the stomach as hard as I could let drive, getting him in the wind. Such a blood-curdling row as he made trying to get his breath as he rolled about on the ground, I have never heard before or since. I wrenched the pistol from his grasp—and then, I'm afraid, I kicked him savagely, not once or twice only. My idea was, I suppose, to knock him out. I never should have thought that I could have kicked a man who was down ; but such skunks as these ! I had forgotten the third man, to say nothing of Sullivan. It was all right, however ; for Bates had got the third man down and was kicking him too ; while Sullivan, sitting on the floor, still probably half dazed, had covered his face with his hands, expecting, doubtless, the fate he had meted out to Thomas.

" Well, now, what's to be done ? " Bates asked, spitting on the floor.

" Get all their pistols first ; there's probably one in that chap's pocket," I replied, pointing to the third man over whom Bates was still standing, and whose pockets he now searched.

I had already got hold of the one that the Jew had dropped, and I now went across to the man in

the Homburg hat with it in my hand. He cringed and squirmed as I approached him, thinking, without doubt, that I was about to kill him. But all I wanted was the pistol, which I knew he had in his pocket and which belonged to Sullivan. I took it from him, then picked up the one that had fallen in the corner and put them both in my pocket. As I stooped down to pick them up, a shot rang out. It was Bates; and the shot had hit the wall not far from me.

"What are you up to?" I asked him.

"Beg pardon, mister," he replied coolly; and I saw he was merely examining the pistol. "I wants to see 'ow it works," he continued.

"For God's sake, put it down," I said. "You'll be shooting yourself in half a minute."

"I'd like," said Bates, still playing with the pistol, "to give them blank, blank, blankety blankers" (his language was shocking) "a taste of their own medicine—though I don't 'old" (the pistol went off again) "with this 'ere cold-blooded murder." He spat again.

"They've had a dose that will last them some time," I replied; "better leave it at that." But at the same time I was also tingling to put a bullet into each of them.

"Now if this 'ere was a rifle or a 'bagginet' or a bomb, I'd know 'ow to use it," said Bates, looking into the muzzle of the pistol.

He was that admirable type of Briton who will sit and smoke on a truckload of dynamite, or pick up and handle a "dud" shell, or beat it on the nose with a big stone with perfect confidence (the pistol went off again, just missing his ear), or stroll casually across "No Man's Land" in broad daylight, or do any other lunatic thing with impunity. Fate seems to have a soft corner in its heart for these men, for they so constantly escape scot-free from the consequences of their own mad actions.

"Better give it to me," I said.

Bates, taking no notice, nodded his head once or twice, still examining the pistol, but with the muzzle turned towards the wall. It went off again. He nodded his head again as if satisfied, and walked over to Sullivan.

"I don't 'old with this 'ere cold-blooded murder," he said, as he played with the pistol. There was another report and a shriek as Sullivan rolled over kicking. "But," continued Bates, "Ginger Thomas there was my mate."

He expectorated again, and handed me the pistol. I had now four of them in my pockets.

"Nasty little things they are," he said. Then he rumbled internally with a bout of silent laughter.

Until this time the people up above had taken no interest in events down below. The trap-door was shut, yet they must have heard the firing, for we could ourselves hear men laughing. But this

last group of shots and Sullivan's screams aroused their curiosity. The trap-door opened and a head appeared.

"Is all right down there?" a man asked.

"Quite all right," I answered promptly. But on the instant the man in the hat, who had been knocked over by Bates, screamed out something in some foreign language. It was neither French nor German, with both of which I have a nodding acquaintance. Its effect was electrical. The head at the trap-door disappeared. A minute later two flashlights were projected through the opening, lighting up the interior and dazzling my eyes, while a bullet whistled past me.

"Bolt for it," I yelled to Bates, and, suiting the action to the word, I ran to the tunnel. As I went I felt a blow on my stern. For a moment I thought Bates—it could only be him—had kicked me, and "Damn it, what did you do that for?" I exclaimed. But it was a bullet, of course, and my left leg crumpled up under me. Fortunately it was a mere flesh wound, or this story would never have been written. I was up on my legs again at once, and nipped under cover into the tunnel, whence I peered round to look for Bates. "Come along quick," I sang out. But do you suppose he would run? Not a bit of it. Carrying a lantern, expectorating as he went, he slouched in my direction in just the same fashion as he had doubtless

many a time walked forward behind, or even through, a barrage in France. They must have fired about a dozen shots at him as he came across the big chamber, and how they managed to miss him I cannot conceive. Not only that, but by way of covering his retreat I essayed a shot or two at our enemies. My bullets must have passed unpleasantly close to his head, but he took no notice of them. As he joined me he was grumbling to himself—"I don't 'old with this 'ere——"

Well, now, it was a case of stalemate, and for over an hour I suppose we maintained our relative positions—trench warfare, so to speak.

Then one of our opponents did a very gallant thing. He swung himself suddenly through the trap-door, and before I could guess what he would be at, he had dropped, landed like a cat, and was into the shadow opposite the mouth of our tunnel. I shot at him, but evidently without effect. The two flashlights were directed full into our tunnel, dazzling my eyes, lighting me up, and intensifying the gloom outside the rays of light. Then this fellow began to fire, and his shooting was much better than mine. I am not much of a hand with these automatic pistols; give me a good army-pattern revolver, obsolete though it may be. He had all the advantage in this duel; and Bates and I were constrained to retire. I got him to go first, and told him to take the second passage to the right,

and—the happy thought striking me—to put down the lantern in the mouth of the first passage. I had my flashlight in my pocket, so that we could afford to lose the lantern. It was really rather a good move; for the lantern lit up the tunnel a few yards away from us, and none of our enemies dared to come within the circle of light. They also believed that we had gone into the first passage. From where we were we could see four of them collected just beyond it. I could have browned them easily, and got one or perhaps two of them. But what good would it have been? How would it have helped us? It would merely have given away our position. I recognise now, of course, that I was a fool not to shoot.

I was cudgelling my brains, wondering what we were going to do. They were also engaged in the same pursuit. I had some foggy idea that they would presently try to rush us in the first passage; that we might then nip in between them and the big chamber, and make our way out before they could discover our whereabouts. I whispered the plan to Bates, but he threw cold water on it. "We'll never get through," he whispered; "there's too many on 'em up above."

"Would any of the miners help us?" I asked.

"Maybe one or two," was his answer, "but they're pitmen like me, and they're not armed."

"And who are the others?" I asked.

"Bolshies, or Shin Feeners, or 'Reds'—dirty scum!" Bates replied in a hoarse growl.

"Are they English—or Irish?"

"Not they; they're Jews and Dagoes and what not."

His temper was clearly getting the better of him; and I judged it wise to cease our conversation lest we should be heard.

I looked at our enemies with interest. I had never seen a Bolshevist before. The athlete, he who had swung himself down from the trap-door, had his back turned to us; but I could see two of the others clearly. Both were dark men with black hair and brown complexions. The nose and lips of one of these proclaimed his race.

The athlete was saying something that seemed to amuse them. Suddenly he spun round on his heel, sprang across the circle of light at the mouth of the first passage, and stood with his back to us again, his pistol in his hand, peering into the first passage.

I could have shot him easily from where I was, and I suppose I was a fool not to do so. I wished later that fortune would give me another such chance. But notwithstanding Bates' arguments I still entertained the idea of getting past them into the big chamber; and I hoped to see the athlete, followed by the others, go into the first passage.

He stood for a moment at gaze. "I can't see

them," he said; "but I expect they're just round the corner." He flashed his torch as he spoke into the passage.

"Well, we've got them, sure," one of the others replied; "they can't get out."

"They may have gone down to the shore to get out that way and left the lantern behind to put us off the scent—of course, that's what they've done," said a third, "and we've lost ten minutes here already—they'll be out and we shall all be nabbed!"

This pessimistic idea clearly disquieted two of them, and they turned and started off towards the big chamber.

I was full of hope; here was an unexpected *dénouement*; but dawning hope was dashed. It was the athlete, the man with his back to us, he who had so gallantly leapt down into the chamber, who pulled them together.

"Rats!" he exclaimed; "they won't know how to get out."

So there was some method of getting out of the cavern on to the sea beach that I had failed to discover. I asked my comrade if he knew the secret of it; but no, he did not.

"The stranger will know how to get out; he must have come in that way." It was the pessimist speaking again.

Then the athlete took charge. "You, Keogh," he said, speaking to the pessimist, "go back and

see that they don't escape up through the mine head. Look after Sullivan and——," he mentioned another name which I failed to catch; probably the man in the Homburg hat. "Send José," he continued, "and three others to head them off from the village in case they have got out by the beach. We three will follow them down the tunnel. Tell José that he must not let them get away past him; and remember, if you let them get away past you, it will be the worst day's work you've ever done."

A pretty band of brigands this! Like all such, they could not trust each other. In that, it struck me, lay our chief hope.

The athlete then added something in a low voice which I could not catch.

"All right, captain," replied Keogh, the pessimist, with a laugh, "I will see to it."

I wonder if you can conceive the tremendous moral uplift I experienced in the sense of companionship that the presence of Bates gave me? My nervous despondency, born of the darkness, silence and loneliness—the desire to give myself up, no matter what the consequences—vanished. I was no longer alone in these poisonous vaults—I could hear Bates' regular breathing close alongside of me. The knowledge that I now possessed a comrade—a staunch one, too, unless I was much mistaken, who was at home in these subterranean passages—gave me back my self-confidence.

More than that, I felt a sense of elation at the prospect of a contest with these bloodthirsty revolutionaries. Here we were, armed; and so far, notwithstanding my wound, we had distinctly got the better of them. The fascination of adventure began to take hold of me.

That is what the presence of Bates, a sterling good man, as I judged, had done for me

Bates? Bates? Where on earth had I known him?

CHAPTER VI

BATES

JACK SAUNDERSON'S ADVENTURE

BATES and I in our hiding-place listened, as you may imagine, with avidity to the orders issued by the athlete, the man they had called "captain." Wasn't it Frederick the Great who said you can always beat your enemy if you know his plans? Our counter-plan was drawn up on the instant, and it was an identical plan, though framed without collaboration. There was, in fact, but one thing to be done. They knew we were somewhere in these mine workings, and they meant to hunt us till they found us. Our discovery and death was a mere matter of time unless we could upset their scheme. And they were about to give us the opportunity we hoped for. If only the captain with his two men would hurry off down the tunnel and give us a chance of following and nobbling the pessimist before he could get up the ladder! And that is exactly what they did. Peering out

at the entrance of our passage, we saw the captain followed by two men pass down the tunnel. We crept to the entrance and watched the light of the lanterns fade away in both directions. Then as quickly as we could we pursued the pessimist. We scurried to the turning in the tunnel. But just before we reached it a blaze of light flashed in our faces, while some one laughed. The whole tunnel was lit up as clear day by electric torches. We were fairly caught; for the captain and his crowd were running back up the tunnel. I was leading, and found myself looking into the muzzle of a pistol, and "Hands up," shouted a stern voice. Well, I don't quite know what I did, I was so utterly taken by surprise. But I had a pistol in my hand, and I think I must have let it off and turned and bolted into the first passage, the one trending inland, which was but a few yards behind me. A shot whistled past me; and I remember thinking at the time that they would hesitate to shoot for fear of hitting each other. I ran straight into Bates round the first corner of the passage. He had been behind me, close to the mouth of the passage, and had bolted in directly the light flashed out.

You may perhaps remember that I had originally decided that if in difficulties and obliged to run for it, I would take the passage which trended back towards the sea, that is, according to my judgment,

towards the club house. It was in that passage that Bates and I had taken refuge in the first instance. But having fallen into the trap which was so cunningly laid for us, we now found ourselves in the other passage, the one that trended inland. Well, there was not much in it, as I thought at the time; as, after all, I had no real knowledge of where either of these passages led, or whether it was possible to get out by either of them. But I was quickly disabused for we heard our enemies in the tunnel laughing at the success of their ruse and congratulating their captain. He it was who very boldly showed himself at the mouth of the passage, holding a lantern in his hand, and looking in and, I thought, laughing. "Bates," he called out, "come along out now, and give yourself up and take your gruel. You can't escape. We've got you bottled; that passage leads nowhere—it's a cul-de-sac." The fellow was a gentleman by his voice.

Neither of us answered.

"Come along out," he continued impatiently; "and that other fellow—whoever he may be. We'll let you go free," he added as an afterthought.

Bates and I both laughed out loud; and the captain laughed too. He evidently possessed a sense of humour. "Come along now," he said again. I was standing peering round the corner with one eye, my head hidden by a projecting

piece of rock. Bates was behind me. We were both well under cover. The captain, on the other hand, was standing in the open in full view of me, except for his face, which was in the shadow thrown by the top of the lantern. I was at the time, and am still, full of wonder at his courage. He must have known that I was armed; and for all he knew to the contrary I might have shot him down. As a matter of fact, the corner was, so to speak, a right-handed one, that is, I was looking round it to my right, and had I wished to shoot I must have used my left hand, or exposed myself had I wanted to fire with my right. Now, I cannot shoot for nuts with my left hand; but of that he could not have been aware. He may, however, have gathered, from my failure to hit anybody with the shots I had already fired, that my marksmanship was poor, and was prepared to take the risk of being shot himself in the hope of inducing me to expose myself while aiming at him. Anyhow, there he calmly stood, full in the middle of the passage, holding the lantern up with his left hand, but with his right—a pistol in it to a certainty—concealed behind him.

He looked quite a pleasant fellow, this captain, a gentleman by his voice, dress and carriage. He was dressed in black; and I thought I could catch the sheen of a white shirt-front and white cuffs, but could not be certain. Anyhow, I found

it difficult to believe that he was one of this gang of cut-throats. Somehow I thought I had seen him before.

"Ah, now, come along out," he said; and his voice was very persuasive.

"Suppose we talk it over first," I replied.

"Who in hell are you?" he asked. "You're not Bates—you are the police spy, are you?"

I made no reply, for I was thinking hard.

If I told them who I was, and that I had fallen in there unknown to anyone—well, I had seen enough of their methods to be certain that they would quietly put me away. If, on the other hand, I allowed them to believe that I was a police spy, and that I had been sent to verify certain suspicions, and that if I disappeared these suspicions would be verified—why, they might believe me and bolt for it. The thing to do was to take a high hand.

More to gain time to think than for any other reason—though I confess I was curious—I asked: "How did you know we were in that other passage?"

"Sure, by your blood, man—you've been bleeding all over the place—messing up our nice clean floor."

He laughed again; and a minute later,

"Bates," he called out, "look here, Bates, we've no quarrel with you. That other's the man we want—a dirty police spy. You hand him over to us—just rap him on the head with that little fist of yours."

"Your game's up," I said as coolly as I could. "If I don't report in a couple of hours' time, you are all to be rounded up to-night."

But I had made a mistake; and I knew it the moment I had uttered it.

There was a shuffling of feet outside in the tunnel; but the captain never turned a hair. Instead he laughed.

"You are a pretty fellow to give away the show like that" he said; "they'll promote you for it, I expect," and he laughed again. "Come along Bates," he added, "hand him over to us."

But on that Bates broke in. He stepped round the corner in front of me, and burst into a torrent of the most appalling invective. His rhetoric was, however, cut short by a bullet, which chipped a piece out of his ear. It was the poor light given by the lantern which alone saved him.

I seized hold of him, jerked him back under cover, and damned him into heaps. The man had certainly been a soldier. He must also have recognised that I had been an officer; and my language must have touched a chord in his memory, for I heard his boots click together as he stood to attention. I doubt whether he had been cursed in that fashion since he had ceased his soldiering. More than that, he enjoyed it; it reminded him of happier times. He evidently thought that it was consideration for his safety alone which was the

cause of my outburst, for all he said was, "Beg pardon, sir." As a matter of fact, to be quite honest, though I dislike having to admit it, I was horribly perturbed at the thought that, if he were killed, I should lose my comrade, and be again left alone in these beastly subterranean passages. Not very heroic, I am afraid.

"Let's get back round the next corner," I whispered to him; "I shall be able to shoot with my right hand—you go first."

So without a sound we crept down the passage, and again ensconced ourselves under cover.

The captain seemed to be aware that we had gone, for he raised his voice. "Very well," he shouted; "we shall starve you out, and it will be the worse for you when we do get you."

The light of the lantern faded as though it had been taken out of the passage, and we were in pitch darkness. Yet somehow I had an idea that the captain was following us up, and my impression was confirmed when Bates whispered to me, "He's coming arter us." So I in my turn whispered to Bates, putting my torch into his hand, kneeling down, and pointing my pistol round the corner. "Now," I said out loud when I was ready. Bates flashed on the torch, and on the instant a shot whistled close under it, between Bates' hand and my head. Had I been standing up and looking round the corner it would have got me. I

groaned, hoping that the captain would think he had hit me and show himself; but the light of the torch was projected too high, lighting up the roof of the passage, and no glimpse did I catch of him. Yet I knew that he was lurking just round the next corner.

We remained thus for perhaps a couple of minutes, which, however, seemed like two hours. Bates' hand began to waver. Then I saw a hand grasping a pistol appear round the corner; and before it was fired, I aimed at it and pressed the trigger. The beastly thing clicked—the magazine was empty! There was a loud laugh from the captain, who let off three or four shots at us, which all missed, while I got another pistol out of my pocket. By the time I had got it ready the hand was withdrawn.

So here it was a case of stalemate again. Only we could not go on in this fashion for ever. Presently Bates switched off the light, knelt down beside me, and we held a conference. We decided that he was to take the torch and see where the passage led; for had it been a cul-de-sac, the captain would not have followed us up. He had evidently been lying when he said it led nowhere. In the meantime I was to remain where I was and keep guard. We both of us rather feared that there might be another way into this passage, and that we might be taken in rear while the captain engaged our attention in front.

Well, I lay there listening for all I was worth. I heard a distant oath, a shout, and a scramble from Bates, followed by dead silence. I thought I heard our enemy creeping on me, and I longed to let off my pistol on the chance of bagging him. But I refrained, fearing lest the noise of the shot should bring Bates back. I was lying on my stomach, and I thrust forward both hands as feelers, resting on the elbows, holding the pistol in the right hand. How long I lay there I have no notion, but by degrees my nerves began to get the better of me. I imagined all sorts of things. I remembered the oath and the scramble. What could have caused them? He must have fallen—into a mine shaft, perhaps. Yes, that was the probable explanation. That would also account for the captain's action. He, of course, knew of the mine shaft, and had tried to drive us into it. He would probably come on again in a minute or two. But nothing happened, and I had just made up my mind to search for Bates when the captain made his move. A torch light flashed into my eyes. I let off my pistol again and again at random. A shot or two, also, I think, came in my direction, but I could not be certain. The fusillade lasted a moment only. The torch was switched off. I gave them another shot or two for luck, then lay still again, withdrawing my head and hands under cover.

A few minutes later the torch flashed out again. But I lay "doggo," watching the light on the wall. I should be able to judge from it if they ventured to come on. They kept the light switched on, and I heard whispering. They were evidently reconnoitring my position, and could not make up their minds whether I was still there.

Presently they became bolder, for I saw a shadow which told me that some one had stepped in front of the light. Now was my chance. I whipped the pistol round the corner, and let drive three or four shots. There were yells and oaths; the torch went out, but I could hear my enemies retreating in disorder. I waited a few seconds more, then rose to my feet and crept off after Bates, feeling my way along both walls with arms outstretched. I feared lest the passage might bifurcate. Also I feared a mine shaft, and stepped with the utmost caution. I suppose I must have gone fifty feet or more when I saw a gleam of light in front of me. It disappeared, but I heard what I thought was Bates' voice speaking in an undertone. I stopped and listened. Again there came a flash of light. followed by the voice, which said, "Look out, sir!" I moved forward with, if possible, increased caution. Once more came the flash of light, followed by the same remark; and the light came from a hole in the floor. Down I went on my hands and knees, and, creeping forward, I came to the edge

of a yawning chasm, from which a cold draught issued. As I knelt there with my head over the edge, a blinding light struck me full in the face. "Look out, sir," Bates' voice whispered somewhere down in this chasm. I understood at once what had happened. Bates must have fallen in, been unable to get out, feared to shout to me lest our adversaries should hear him, so adopted this means of warning me when I came to look for him.

"Wait a bit, sir."

He had seen me.

The electric light disappeared, and a second later I heard Bates scratching a match. Then there came an oath. Another match was struck. I also lit one. I was then able to see where we were. I was at the end of the passage, except for a very small opening, barely a foot in diameter, to my left and over my head about four feet from the ground. But in the floor of my passage was a mine shaft going straight down to any depth you please. It was about six feet across. I dropped my half-burnt match and lit another. There, about six feet below the floor, down in the shaft, was Bates' head gazing up at me from what appeared to be a passage on a lower level. He was standing with his head screwed up.

"I fell in 'ere," Bates whispered; "only luck I didn't fall right down, and I can't get out again. You'd best come down 'ere, sir; we may be able

to get out this way. There's some water here too."

"How am I to get down?" I asked.

"You'll have to catch on to the far edge of the shaft from where you are, swing down an' drop on this ledge—I'll catch you when you land."

I lit another match, and came all over in a cold sweat as I grasped the nature of the athletic feat I must accomplish.

"Be quick, sir!"

There was no time to delay, for I heard voices behind me. It was just as well perhaps; for I doubt whether I would have tackled it at all if I had had time to think over it. I know my hand was shaking so that I could hardly put my match-box back into my pocket. I reached forward, kneeling as I was, with one hand, but could not get within three feet of the further edge.

"You must jump for it," said Bates urgently.

I stood up, feeling dizzy, and flung myself forward. I grasped at and got hold of the further edge of the shaft, and my feet swung down. My hands slipped, and I yelled as I fell. The next minute I was lying, gasping with funk, in the passage with Bates standing by me. I had landed on the ledge, and Bates had caught me just as I was toppling over backwards.

A piece of the ledge broke away, indeed, under my weight and hurtled down into the abyss.

We heard it strike first one, then the other side of the shaft; finally there was a sullen plunge. Bates reached down suddenly, seized my arms, and dragged me further into the passage. There we both lay watching and listening. Presently a glow of light reached us even where we lay, and we knew our enemies were standing looking down into the mine shaft. I felt for the pistols in my pockets, not with any idea of using them at that juncture, but just to see if they were all right.

There was talking and laughter going on up above.

"That now's a foine finish," said one. That fellow, at least, was an Irishman; there was no mistaking his rich brogue.

"I thought they would have fought it ou" said another in an astonished, aggrieved and disappointed tone. I recognised the captain speaking; we had evidently sunk in his estimation. I could understand that. He was a fine fighter himself; the last man to chuck it and commit suicide by leaping down a chasm, rather than take his chance in a fight against odds.

But even as he spoke I knew that he would not remain long under his delusion. Sure enough his next words showed that he was thinking. "One of them," he said, "may have fallen in; but I don't believe the other jumped in."

"We heard a yell," another man reminded him, "and something fell down there."

There was silence.

"I shouldn't wonder," said the captain, "if they had got into that passage."

"It isn't possible," said another, "without a rope."

They then debated the possibility. Their discussion interested me hugely, for I was wondering how Bates had managed it. I had not had an opportunity to ask him as yet. The captain, however, took no part in the discussion. In the meantime their torchlight probed about the ledge and the entrance to our passage. It remained stationary for a long time at one point, then wandered off, but again returned to this point. From where I was lying I could see, as I thought, one point at which the captain was looking. There was a tell-tale smear of blood where my leg had rested for a minute or two. It was well inside the passage, and the very edge of the light only reached it. From where they were, if they could see it at all, it might well look like a shadow of a darker-coloured piece of rock. But what the other thing was that they were looking at I could not conceive—the point, that is, to which the light kept returning. That point was out on the ledge where there was a slight inequality in the floor. Had Bates left my torch lying there, I wondered? I asked him in a whisper, but he had it in his pocket.

Presently a lantern appeared swinging at the end of a rope, and there was much whispering up above.

Two or three flashlights were focused on one particular point on the ledge which we could not see. Something was said which we could not catch. Then we heard the captain, as we thought, say very distinctly, "No, they're not in there; they must have fallen down the shaft."

The next minute the lantern was pulled up, the light of it faded away, while the voices became more distant. At last there was impenetrable silence and darkness.

"He knows we're in here all right," said Bates.

"How do you know?" I asked.

"Them were bits of a match I dropped he were looking at."

"The question is," said I, "what are we to do now?"

But there was no reply forthcoming. Problems of strategy were apparently within my province, and not within that of Bates.

"Do you know of any other way into this passage?" I asked him.

"Not as I knows on," he replied.

"Do you know these mine workings?"

"I knows nuthin' about 'em, sir, except the road down to the shore,"

Well, the first thing to do was to get a drink. It was infernally hot and stuffy in these passages. Bates showed me a trickle of water, and to my delight produced a hunk of bread and cheese.

Then I asked him to look to my wound. It was worse than I thought. The muscles of my stern were rather badly torn. Fortunately the bullet had caught me a glancing blow. Bates washed out the wound and managed to bandage it with the sleeves of my shirt.

We then set off to reconnoitre the passage, and find some place where we could rest in comparative security. I say "we," but as a matter of fact I was the one who felt "done in." I was sore and stiff, could hardly move my leg, and owing, I suppose, to loss of blood, yawned continually in jaw-breaking fashion. I had an intense longing for sleep.

In a few hundred yards we came to another passage, cutting ours at right angles—four cross-roads, indeed.

Here it was I told Bates that I simply could not go any further. So we continued straight on about twenty yards beyond the cross-roads and lay down. From this point we could watch anyone who came to the cross-roads.

We overhauled the pistols. I had three of them still. They were all of the same make, the small automatic Browning. One was fully charged with ten rounds in the magazine; one that I had used with only four; and the third with five. I filled up the magazine of the third from that of the second and gave it to Bates, and also gave him a lesson with the unloaded pistol. But he could not pick up the

idea of it all at once. They are tricky things. He told me that the long cases contained automatic pistols and not rifles—of German make, he believed—and that they had been brought into the cavern by the sea by submarines during the war. That, at least, was the talk amongst the miners.

Then I lay down to go to sleep, while Bates was to do sentry-go.

But sleep would not come; I was over-tired, I suppose. After turning about for a few minutes I asked Bates what regiment he had served in during the war. He answered, in some astonishment at my ignorance, that he and I had been in the same regiment, only that he had been in No. 1 Company, the other Mister Saunderson's Company. "Why, sir," he added, "you was one of the orficers as tried me by coort martial—I knowed you when you put it acrost me just now."

Bates?—Bates?—I remembered the name right enough; but I had sat on numerous courts martial at one time or another.

"What were you tried for?" I asked him.

"Desertion, sir; but I warn't no deserter."

Then the whole story came out; and I remembered it well. We thought we would chance giving ourselves away by the smell of tobacco and lit our pipes. Then, as I could not sleep, I disposed myself to listen to his yarn. It was interesting; the first time I had ever really heard the naked

explanation of a military crime from the point of view of the culprit. True, I had often heard the official explanation as given by prisoners at their trial; but these had been so carefully edited that, for the most part, they lacked all human touches.

This one was different.

Bates had volunteered at the beginning of the war. Having an independent spirit, he had soon come to loggerheads with a corporal. He disliked the way in which this corporal spoke to him; he disliked the fashion in which he looked at him; he disliked the cut of his jib; and one fine day he hit him on the nose. Bates was much upset because, while other men who had fallen foul of non-commissioned officers had been let off as first offenders, he, for exactly the same offence, was tried by court martial and sentenced to field imprisonment. I could, of course, easily guess the reason. There had been too much of that sort of thing and an example was necessary. Bates constituted the example. He was, however, a good fellow and a good soldier; and when he rejoined his company he found that no ill-will existed. Nevertheless his crime and its punishment were recorded in black and white, to be raked up against him later. He then, unfortunately, fell a victim to poisonous liquor which he had obtained at a Belgian farm-house when the battalion was resting. Once again an example was necessary

and poor Bates was selected because he had resisted the escort. As a matter of fact, he had only reached the fighting stage, while his comrades had passed beyond it and were incapable. So he was again tried. He was well known not only in his own company but throughout the battalion as a very willing and gallant soldier; but these two entries in his defaulter sheet looked bad. Striking a N.C.O. and drunkenness on active service—Well——! And these crimes were to be followed by the worst of all—desertion.

Bates was still very sore about it; he had never, he maintained, intended to desert or been a real deserter. "I didn't go for to do it, sir," he explained. He had merely done what everybody else—what all the best people—had done; he was in the fashion. After eighteen months' service in France and Belgium he was given ten days' leave, having been slightly wounded. He went to his home in the north of England and had a grand time. He got up, or got drunk, whenever he pleased; and he worked off the drink by a little strenuous labour in the mines for which he received magnificent wages. He happened to be drunk when it was time to return to France. By the time he was sober and had worked off the effects of his debauch he had overstayed his leave by a week. For that, if he now returned, he would be given field imprisonment, which, as he had already experienced, was a most unpleasant period of deadly monotony. He would,

quite likely, have a month of it. If, on the other hand, he overstayed his leave a bit longer, it was doubtful whether he would be much more heavily punished when he did return. As everybody knew, the more severe the punishment, the more chance existed that a part of it would be remitted. It was a standing joke against poor Jones—"'Im wot was killed down on the Somme"—that he had got twenty-eight days and done the whole of it; whereas Smith, who had remained absent much longer, and had got forty-two days, had had twenty-eight days remitted, and so had come off cheaper than Jones. Yet he had enjoyed the longer spree.

On the whole, Bates thought he would stay at home a little longer. If he went back at once, not only would he be punished, but he would be serving in the trenches, up to the eyes in mud and half-frozen water, constantly employed on fatigue, carrying trench-mortar bombs, repairing wire, going to ground like a rabbit when a flare went up, "never nuthin' to drink worth speaking of"—a humdrum and monotonous existence, enlivened only when his company was called on to raid the enemy.

Then came a letter which was passed from hand to hand. It was from a comrade who had overstayed his leave by six months or more, been caught by the police, sent back, tried for desertion and sentenced to death. But the sentence had been

"deferred" to give the man another chance. Hence the jubilant letter; for the writer was naturally pleased at his cleverness in having got off scot-free. He had suffered no punishment of any sort, except that extremely shadowy sword of Damocles in the shape of the death sentence which might be inflicted if he again deserted. That was nothing to him! Why, he ran the risk of being blown to pieces or riddled with bullets every hour of the day and night.

There was a chorus of "Don't 'e go back, Bates; don't 'e go back—you stop along o' us for a bit." The letter unfortunately had not mentioned—the writer was unaware of it—that an order had come round that in view of the temporary prevalence of desertion an example was necessary and that the extreme penalty would be enforced in the next case that occurred. The spring was coming on; a great offensive was projected; every man would be required, and this desertion and absence must be stopped.

Bates was the next case. The police unearthed him and he was sent back to his regiment under escort. I sat as a member of the court that tried him. There was nothing for it; there was his bad record; and he was sentenced to death, though recommended to mercy on the score of his bravery and fine fighting qualities.

Now John was his Company Commander; and

it was with his full cognisance that Bates, two nights later, was included in a raiding party. The raid was brilliantly successful, Bates especially distinguishing himself by his pluck. He was recommended for the Military Medal.

You can imagine the awful row that took place. Here was a man under sentence of death for the worst of all military offences, who had been granted the great privilege of taking part in an attack on the enemy—been given an opportunity to distinguish himself. Such a thing was unheard of. The hand of the Commander-in-Chief had been forced; the prerogative of mercy had been filched from him. How, the authorities wished to know, could such an amazing mistake have occurred? John explained at length that his company was very short-handed; that he could not spare any men from duty; that it was an encouragement to crime to permit culprits under sentence to loaf in the transport lines; and that a good fighter such as Bates was worth his weight in gold in a raid. I remember that all we Company Commanders put our heads together to draw up this reply and how pleased the Colonel was with it. The Brigadier, too, was delighted that we had managed to save such a good man as Bates; and we heard that the Divisional and Corps Commanders were equally pleased. But in course of time a snorter came down from G.H.Q., which made us think that we were not, perhaps, the fine

fellows we had thought ourselves. We had an idea, however, that the rude things said in it were not really intended; and I dare say we were right; for it was not very long afterwards that John got his D.S.O. There it was, however; Bates' death sentence was commuted to penal servitude, and the punishment was deferred and hung up over his head. After this, if I remember right, there was no holding him—from acts of courage, I mean. He it was who, when the Bosches raided us in their turn and collared a Lewis gun, headed a rush, his sergeant having been killed, recovered the gun and nobbled half a dozen prisoners, including an officer. For this his sentence was washed out altogether; and later on, for another act of conspicuous gallantry, he was given the Military Medal and sent home wounded. Nevertheless, he was very sore at having been called a deserter; and I now found that the accusation still rankled. He could not grasp the nice distinctions between absence and desertion; and maintained that he had only overstayed his leave "same as all the other blokes." He also considered that he had been very unjustly treated. Here he was, a man who had volunteered at the first call to arms; he had served for two years, taking his chance of being killed, for what he regarded as an entirely inadequate wage; he had been punished for being drunk—an unheard-of thing—and for hitting a man; finally, having stayed away a bit too long, he was dragged

back as a criminal, sentenced to death and saved only by a clever trick. Nice treatment for a "volunteer"! Then, though he had been twice wounded, he had served on for the remainder of the war.

On the other hand, there were thousands of men who had refused to volunteer, who remained comfortably at home employed at their usual task, getting drunk and staying away from work whenever they wished, earning tremendous wages, and who were never punished at all.

I tried to explain to him that what was mere light-heartedness in a civilian was a bitter crime in a soldier; and that if every man in an army were to be allowed to knock his non-commissioned-officers about, get drunk and stay away whenever it suited his convenience, the army would very soon be wiped out by the enemy. He understood that all right; but he still considered that those who had not volunteered should have been punished for it in some fashion or another; and from this position he would not budge.

Then he had a further complaint to make. This time it was against the labour leaders as well as the government. When demobilised he had returned to work as a miner and had immediately been ordered out on strike. Having been a soldier he had no money to live on except his unemployment dole, whereas those who had not served were merely

enjoying a pleasant holiday on the money they had saved, or on the proceeds of furniture, jewellery, et cetera, they had bought when in affluence. He was, accordingly, delighted to get back to work. Then the government, or the capitalists, or the mine owners suddenly reduced his wages and he was again ordered out—locked out this time, he said it was.

The strike, or lock-out, whichever it might have been, was expected to last for months; his mine was to be flooded and ruined and would probably be permanently closed down. Thousands of miners, of whom he was one, had been thrown out of work for good. In the meantime he had been preached at and prayed to by agitators and revolutionaries. Then, at last, in a moment of madness, he had become a Communist, taken service with the Red Army which was being formed and had been sent down to Cornwall to work in the tin mines. On arrival he found himself employed not as a miner, but as a beast of burden—driven as a beast of burden by men with pistols in their hands.

I must confess that as he put his story it sounded all very wrong. The man, if not actually penalised for serving his country, had come to grief through doing so—that is, he had become embittered by what he regarded as unfair treatment compared to that meted out to those who had not volunteered and who had never served. It was the expression

" volunteer " which had misled him. As such he considered that he had a perfect right to take a holiday whenever he thought fit, and that the authorities in tying him up with rules and regulations had not played the game.

But now, by Jove! he had tumbled out of the frying-pan into the fire with a vengeance. When, finally, I asked him how his new rulers compared with his old ones in the army, he laughed good-humouredly. He had had no fault to find, he explained, with the officers of the real army; they were gentlemen; but for these—then followed some tasty appellations for the officers of the Red Army—he had no use whatsoever. Why, he went on, they killed a man for nothing, as I had seen for myself. Poor " Ginger " Thomas was the second man he had seen shot down in the last ten days—murdered in cold blood.

One thing—his experiences had entirely cured him of his revolutionary ideas; he now asked for nothing better than to join up with any force which might be organised to fight and destroy these same revolutionaries; and he most heartily hoped that he might live to see the day when he would drive a trusty " bagginet " into the bowels of one or two of them—" especially of them agitators," he said.

So there was his story—that of many another good miner unless I am much mistaken.

Odd, if you think of it, that he should tell it so

fully at such a time and in such a place, though, of course, an underground passage to Bates was as familiar and natural a resort as the smoking-room of my club was to me. Still he seemed absolutely indifferent to the fact that we were trapped and likely to die of thirst and hunger, if not by the expanding bullets of our pursuers.

Fine fellows these miners are as a general run. Like most Britons, they possess a somewhat pronounced sense of their rights and too little, perhaps, of their duties.

Bates evidently considered, for instance, that he had laid his country under a great obligation by volunteering to fight for it; and even after his lurid experiences in France and Belgium, he had no idea what war really meant.

What I mean is, that he had no conception that the British people had barely pulled through by the skin of their teeth, and that if they had been beaten he and his rights and his wrongs would never have been heard of again.

Then Bates began to talk politics, and the monotonous drone of his voice finally soothed me to sleep.

CHAPTER VII

BAKER INTERVENES

JACK SAUNDERSON'S ADVENTURE

I WAS dreaming. I thought I was back at the "Front," that dawn was breaking, and that I ought to have been up and round my posts an hour before. Or perhaps it was only the moon rising.

I could not recall where I was. Why was I sleeping on a hard stone floor? I moved. What was the matter with my leg?

Then I remembered and sat up with, I think, a bit of a groan or grunt. There was a lantern on the floor just in front of me, the light shining full in my eyes, and another by my side. Baker, the fellow I had played golf with, was standing between the two, looking down on me. He was in evening dress—dinner-jacket and black tie.

So they had found and rescued me. Thank Heaven for that!

"Faith! but I am glad to see you, Baker," I said; "how did you find me? It was good of you to come and look for me. Is old John here?"

Then I remembered Bates. "Where's Bates?" I asked.

Baker had said nothing, probably because I had given him no chance. He was just standing there, looking at me with what I took to be a triumphant smile on his face. I did not wonder that he was proud and pleased; it was smart of him to have found me.

But at my last question of "Where's Bates?" he roused himself and replied, "That's just what I want to know."

"He was here——" I began; then something, what it was I don't know, made me suspicious. I looked round behind me expecting, I think, to see John. There, instead of John, was the man in the Homburg hat regarding me with a most malignant expression on his swollen face. Bates' little fist had left its mark. There was another man there too who was grinning. I looked back at Baker and recognised him. He was the "captain." Of course it was his white shirt I had seen.

I gasped and sank back on my elbow. At this the man behind me burst out laughing, while the smile broadened on Baker's face, showing his white teeth.

I put my hand in my pocket. Baker shook his head and laughed outright. The pistol had, of course, been taken from me.

So Bates had saved his own skin by giving me

away. That was my first impression. Then I knew that the mere idea was a foul aspersion; and I was ashamed of myself.

"So you've got me," I heard myself saying as if it were some other man speaking.

Baker nodded. "Where's Bates?" he asked.

I shook my head.

"You'd better tell me," he said.

His insistence annoyed me. "How the hell can I, when I don't know?" I answered querulously. "Even if I did know, why should I?"

"You might save your own skin," he replied, using the exact words that had been in my thoughts a minute before. They sounded to me almost as if Fate were sneering at me for my unworthy thought of Bates. Would I have given Bates away to save my own life? I wondered. No, I think not; I couldn't have faced the look on his face when he learnt of it. But the sudden turning of the tables, so to speak, by Fate tickled my sense of humour and made me laugh. It was quite the best thing I could have done. My eyes were on Baker's face. It wore an expression of self-satisfaction; but at my laugh there flickered for just an instant a look of doubt. It gave me an idea. I managed to yawn; then leaning towards the lamp I looked at my wrist-watch. It was a quarter past five—in the morning, I supposed—Sunday morning.

"Well," said Baker, "are you going to tell me?"

"Not just yet," I replied; "I'll give Bates another half hour."

"You'll be dead long before that," Baker returned sharply, with an undoubted note of excitement in his voice.

"Then you'll be hanged," I said; "not that it matters much," I added, "you'll be hanged anyhow—one murder more or less won't make any difference, I suppose."

"You forget," said Baker, "that without your evidence as well as Bates' they can't convict us—even if they could ever catch us."

So he had taken my bait all right—swallowed it whole! That gave me the clue to my line of action. If I could but convince him that I knew of a way out, that I was the police spy he had termed me and had sent Bates off to get help, the whole gang of them might make a bolt for it.

"Even if they did catch us and convict us," Baker went on, and he laughed scornfully, "they wouldn't punish us—we are political offenders, in pursuit of a noble ideal—don't you forget that!"

"They'd lock us up and let us escape!" said one of the men behind me.

I had no reply; so to gain time I fumbled for my cigarette case and matches. I made a great to-do about getting the match-box out of my breeches pocket, pretending that my leg was far worse than was really the case. I tried to exercise self-control

to prevent my hand shaking as I lit a cigarette; but on second thoughts I let it shake as much as it pleased.

"These expanding bullets you fellows use," I said, trying to keep my voice steady, "are nasty things; they tear you about so."

Baker took his pistol from his pocket and admonished me with it, staring hard at me. "I've another for you here," he said.

"As to evidence," I said, inhaling a whiff of smoke, "they'll get plenty of it—unless you murder all the other miners you've got down here. They're pretty well fed up with you, you know. Even in that case," I went on, trying hard to speak in a very cool argumentative manner, "some of your own men will turn King's evidence to save their skins."

Baker said nothing but merely stared at me. I knew as if he had told me that he was wondering whether I was bluffing. The great thing was to keep it up. It was my only chance.

"Then," I continued, taking another suck at my cigarette, inhaling it slowly and blowing it across the passage, "there are the pistols, et cetera, you've collected here. You can't get them away in the time; and they'll give you away."

With an effort I leant forward and stared back at Baker. "The game's up, Mr. Baker," I said, nodding my head at him slowly; "we've been too smart for you for once." Then I sank back

on my elbow with a groan. I was really very proud of my acting; it was the first time I had ever attempted such a thing, and I sincerely hope it will be the last. The strain of it was damnable. Neither was I under any delusions as to the outcome. They meant to kill me in any case. Baker was merely waiting until he could find out from me what had become of Bates. The longer I could play them the better the chance Bates would have. He might after all have discovered some way out of these infernal workings; he might even now be bringing help. Also the longer I could defer my own execution—well, while there's life, there's hope.

My remark seemed to touch him on the raw. "A nice sort of detective," he said sneeringly, "to give yourself away by smoking." So that was how they had found us.

I was watching Baker's face from under my half-closed eyelids. Lying back as I was, my face was, fortunately, more or less in shadow, while his was now in the full light of one of the lanterns. He was still staring at me, murderous intent written on his face. I was "for it" all right. Whatever happened he meant to kill me.

I marvelled at the time how one man's face could express such diverse emotions. I had seen it in repose—sleek, black hair, dark eyes and complexion, clean-cut features which erred, if anything, on the side of regularity, a clever, almost effeminate, face.

It had struck me when I first met him that there must be the blood of Southern Europe in the man's veins. A "Shinner," Bates had said he was, presumably a so-called Irishman. Well, there you had it; he came, perhaps, from the South of Ireland, was descended, probably, from one of the Spanish castaways of the Great Armada. From all one had heard it was that particular brew of Irish and Spanish blood—Spanish ferocity and fanaticism, grafted on to Irish genius, wit and charm—which has been responsible for all the troubles of the distressful country.

Contrast this mixture with the North of Ireland blood—Saxon grafted on to Irish stock—which gives you—— But I come of that stock myself, so that it hardly becomes me to enlarge on the beauties of it!

I had seen this man's face lit up with childish glee when he had brought off a specially good stroke in his round of golf with me. I remembered his ill-restrained delight when he had won the match, and the display of triumph and vanity which most of us seek to hide and which had nettled me considerably. He had noticed it on the instant and had set himself to efface the impression by charm of manner. How his cheeriness and boyish enthusiasm had appealed to me! Yet he must have been a man of thirty-three or thirty-five at least.

Now I was looking at that same face. It

expressed sneering cruelty, combined with what I took to be personal hatred for me. I could imagine just such a look on the faces of the Spanish Inquisitors of old.

But why he should dislike me was beyond my comprehension. It could hardly be because I was of North of Ireland blood. I supposed it was because he took me for a spy.

But he disabused my mind on the instant. Leaning down towards me, he spoke in an undertone so that the others should not hear, but with a concentrated venom which surprised me. "Unless," he said, "you tell me where Bates is, you'll never see your dear Margery again."

I was so taken aback that I made no reply. Margery! What on earth did the fellow mean? What had Margery got to do with it?

I half raised myself on my elbow, gazing at him in utter astonishment.

Then I grasped it. The man was in love with her and thought I stood in his way.

Did I really stand in his way?

A wave of happiness swept over me at the idea. How could he know? Did he know? Or was he sneering at me?

This last thought enraged me beyond measure.

"You really are a low-class cur," I exclaimed; and with that I flung my half-smoked cigarette in his face. It was the best I could do. It hit him

in his grinning mouth, the sparks spattering up into his eye.

One of the men behind me laughed as Baker rubbed his eyes and spat out tobacco ash. He half raised his pistol and gritted his teeth. I thought the end had come.

But he controlled himself. He did not dare to kill me until he had found out where Bates was.

He stared at me and I stared back at him. I was now every whit as murderous as he; I could have killed him with the utmost pleasure.

"Will you tell me where Bates is?" he rasped out at last.

Then his glance wavered; and he looked up at one of the men behind me. He beckoned with his head; and the man of the Homburg hat stepped past me and joined him.

Now you must understand the position exactly. You will remember that Bates and I, after leaving the shaft, had traversed four to five hundred yards and had then come to cross-passages. We had gone straight on about twenty yards beyond them; I had then called a halt and we had occupied what I thought was a good strategic position from which we could spot anyone passing the cross-roads. I had, in the first instance, sat down facing towards the cross-roads and with my back propped against the wall. But in my attempts to find the easiest position—for my leg was hurting like blazes—I had

ultimately lain down with my head towards the cross-roads and my feet stretched along the passage. The last time I saw Bates, or, rather, the glow of his pipe, he had been sitting at the opposite side of the passage, with his shoulder against the wall and his head turned towards the cross-roads. When I woke and sat up my back was towards the cross-roads; Baker was in front of me facing towards them, while the two others were between me and them. One lantern was at Baker's feet; the other was by the wall where Bates had been sitting. The passage, at this point, was about six feet wide and as many high.

The man of the Homburg hat stepped past me and stood close to Baker, facing him. For the moment he was between me and one lantern. The third man, evidently anxious not to be out of the consultation, moved forward a yard and came between me and the other lantern. All three were intent on what Baker was saying in an undertone to the man of the hat.

"We'll try a little torture," said Baker with a laugh.

I was thinking that here was my last chance. I drew up my legs cautiously as a preliminary to trying to make a bolt for it; but I knew that my chances were very small. I turned my head, meaning to creep a yard before getting to my feet. As I did so, I heard the clink of a nailed boot close by my ear. A fourth figure jumped into the light

of the lantern from behind me and sprang at the third man, and a voice roared "Come along, sergeant, we've got 'em all." There was a waving of arms and legs like a catherine wheel as the third man was picked clean up off the ground and literally hurled head foremost at the other two. He crashed into them, bringing them both down, one of his whirling fists striking Baker full in the face. A large foot kicked the lantern after him, leaving us in darkness; a large hand gripped my arm, and Bates and I were off to the cross-roads. We turned to the right and went away down the passage as quickly and silently as we could, leaving behind us the sound of oaths, and two or three pistol-shots. I felt the grip of poor old Bates' hand on my arm for weeks afterwards.

Well, they knew now that Bates was still in the workings; and we might expect to be hunted like a couple of rats. There was nothing for it but to hurry on down the passage we were in. I went along in front, running, or rather hopping, just as fast as ever I could and switching on the torch, which Bates handed over to me, from time to time to reconnoitre the route and make certain that I did not tumble into another shaft. In a couple of hundred yards or so we came to another cross-passage. There was no time to stop and think which of these we should take; so I carried straight on, cudgelling my brains as I went to try to get my bearings

These passages seemed to be running more or less parallel, and at right angles, to each other. If that were indeed the case—and it was a very big "if"—we ought to be travelling towards the sea, parallel to the big main tunnel, and about four or five hundred yards distant from it. We passed several small passages running away to our right. At the entrance to one of these there was a small patch of sand. We pulled up for a minute to listen and to lay a false trail. Turning down this passage we left a footprint or two just on the very edge of the sand, then turning back, stepping carefully on the hard rock, we continued our road.

That was my idea and I rather plumed myself upon it. My boyish studies of the "Last of the Mohicans" and "The Prairie Flower" had not been for nothing! Bates, also, quite entered into the spirit of it. I had heard him chuckling, or rather rumbling, from time to time at the success of his ruse in shouting to the sergeant to come on. I remembered then that he had bluffed the Bosches in just the same fashion when he had collared an officer. In this case, also, it seemed to have been most successful; and I laughed at the idea of Baker bolting for his life from an imaginary posse of police. How savage he would be!—and crestfallen!

We must have covered the better part of half a mile when we again stopped to rest and listen for a minute. We heard faint voices which I recognised

at once. Not so Bates. "There's people in front of us," he said; "them's wimmen."

I explained that I had heard them before and was certain that they were not real voices, but the sound of running water. But he was incredulous.

"It's all right, man," I said; "come along; I think I know where we are."

I was, indeed, thankful for the chance of a drink; for what with my game leg and the pace I was feeling very done. Sure enough, we reached the brook about a hundred yards on, and pulled up to have a drink.

The passage we had been following continued on at this point, but with the stream running down the centre of it. If we went on down-stream we should, I presumed, go through the home of the fairy voices and come out into the main tunnel, if we could get through; but from what I remembered of the opening that was not possible.

The stream issued from an opening in the rock wall on our left hand. By crawling on one's stomach a man could just manage to get up it. It ought to bring us to my cubby-hole. I decided to try up-stream, get into the cubby-hole if possible, and think out some plan. I went in first with the torch, feeling by no means elated at the idea of a four or five hundred yards' crawl. But I found it much easier than walking; for I could drag my damaged leg without putting any weight on it.

Better still, the passage we had just left had been trending towards the main tunnel; and we reached the cubby-hole before we had gone more than about a hundred yards. We were, of course, wet through from crawling in the bed of the stream; but it was hot in here; the temperature could not have been less than about seventy degrees, and our clothes would soon dry. I showed Bates the spy hole; and he got up and glued his eyes to it, while I stood beside him. But nothing happened, nobody appeared; and presently we tired of it. I lay down while Bates sat down beside me. He told me now how it was that he had been away when I was caught. He was very apologetic. He had heard, or fancied he heard, some one approaching; and, expecting them to follow us by the way of the mine shaft had crept in that direction to reconnoitre. While he was away they had come down one of the passages to the cross-roads, and so cut in between us. He had seen them pick up our track at the cross-roads by the bloodstains left here and there by my boot.

"Then they'll find us again," I said.

"No," replied Bates, "the blood's dried on your boot, sir; I looked to see as we come along."

So that was why he had lit matches from time to time. I had wondered why he was doing it.

"Which cross-passage did they come from?" I asked.

"They come from the direction of the mine

head, sir," he replied. "I egspect they'll find us right enough in time, sir," he continued; "'cause, though you didn't leave no bloodmarks, yet there was one or two sandy places we passed."

I remembered then treading on some soft patches.

"What's become of your pistol, Bates?" I asked him suddenly.

"I got it, sir, all right; but I don't go quite for to understand it. I thought my 'ands was safer." This he said with great self-satisfaction and with a rumbling laugh at the remembrance of how efficaciously he had used them.

You will notice that he had given up calling me "mister" and reverted to the "sir" which he had learnt as a soldier. Once or twice he forgot himself and called me "mister" by mistake; then hastily added "sir."

"If you don't mind, I'd be glad if you'd take it, sir," Bates continued. So I took the pistol and put it in my pocket.

We then discussed our plans.

I told him that John was at the hotel and described to him as well as I could the situation of it. I then told him how I had fallen into the old workings and the manner in which the hole was silting up. I described the caverns I had passed through and described exactly where to look for the passage which led to them from the main tunnel. But I foolishly forgot to mention the passage which

I had noted so carefully and which joined in from the south near the bunker. I explained that if we became separated again, and could find no way out, we must both make our way to the bunker cavern; but if either of us managed to escape he was to go straight to John at the hotel.

I decided on the bunker cavern as a rendezvous because I thought that by standing on Bates' shoulders I might possibly be able to clear the hole and perhaps attract attention, though it would not be possible to climb out without assistance from outside. But it was only an off-chance and it was useless to attempt it until Monday morning; and it now was but seven o'clock on Sunday morning.

Again, there was no hope of escape from the cavern by the sea without a ladder unless we built up a platform of cases. But they would assuredly catch us in the act and have us at their mercy.

So there were two alternatives left. The one was to force our way out at the mine head; the other to search until we discovered some outlet which might exist, but which, on the other hand, might not. The last of these seemed a pretty hopeless affair; for besides the risk of losing ourselves in these subterranean ramifications, there was the prospect of starvation to be faced. Suppose we failed to find an outlet? Well, then, in a couple of days or so, when weak for want of food, we should be reduced to the alternative of fighting our way out

or tamely surrendering to be summarily executed. Far better put up our fight while we had some kick in us.

This was the fashion in which I, as the tactician, argued it out to myself, while Bates sat, hunched up close beside me, snoozing—at least I judged he was by the choked-back snore which I heard from time to time. Well, if we were to force our way out the sooner we attempted it the better. But before deciding finally there were one or two questions I wanted to ask Bates. He, being a miner, could give an expert opinion as to the likelihood of finding some way out other than by the mine head. Or if we were to force our way he could give me some idea as to what we would be up against, and describe to me the ladders or stairs we should have to negotiate. So I woke him. "Bates," I whispered. "Sir," he replied. Then I asked him my first question. Did he think there was any possibility of finding a way out except by the mine head? No, he did not. We might search for one till doomsday—till "the devil caught cold," as he put it. He had kept his eyes about him in the main tunnel as well as in the sea-coast cave, and he agreed with me that the only outlet from the latter must be through the roof, and that was sealed in some fashion by a big rock. Then I told him that there was nothing for it but to fight our way out at the mine head. "Very good, sir," was his reply. He would have given the same

answer had I told him we must burrow through the world to New Zealand. But by the tone of his voice I judged that he was pleased at the idea of another fight. I then asked him to describe the outlet by the mine head; but on this question I was obliged to cross-examine him, for the art of description was not his strong point. I gathered that the chamber from which I had first seen the cases hauled up was nowhere near the surface, and was also the better part of half a mile from the mine head. To get out of these workings by this way you must go up the ladder. Here you would find yourself in a similar but rather larger chamber from which a tunnel ran to near the mine head and to within about fifty feet of the surface. This tunnel had numerous passages leading off on both sides of it, all evidently part of the ancient workings. Most of these had fallen in; but from one of them there was, undoubtedly, a communication with the cross-passages by which Baker had intercepted me. Bates knew nothing of them as he had been employed solely in carrying in the main tunnel. The mine head itself was, he believed, situated in a hollow, round which were one or two buildings; but he knew practically nothing about it, as he with his miner comrades had arrived after dark in a "charrybang." They all lived in a stone building which was practically an underground chamber giving on to the main shaft of the mine. They went down to their work by ladders.

They were not allowed out at all—were prisoners indeed, which had been the cause of the disaffection I had noticed. There were about twelve of them altogether. Up above them, at the top of another ladder by which egress from the workings was obtained, lived the staff of the mine, that is, the officers of the Red Army.

"You mean to say," I asked, "that these officers live quite separately to the miners?"

"Yes, sir," replied Bates.

"Then," I said, "if we could join the miners, we might get them to help us to force our way out?"

"Some of 'em would join us, sir."

"How many?"

Bates considered. I heard him whispering names to himself. "I could be certain of seven, sir," he replied finally; "and I think as 'ow some more would join if we could smother the orficers on duty."

"Officers on duty?" I asked.

"Yes, sir, some on 'em is always on duty."

"You mean," I said, "that you work in shifts, and that some of these officers are on duty with each shift?"

"That's it, sir."

"How many shifts?"

"Two, sir—cruel 'ard it is too, sir," and Bates started grumbling to himself.

"How long is each shift?"

"Four 'ours, sir—four 'ours on and four 'ours

off; and that's bin goin' on now for three weeks. A dorg's life, I calls it."

I chuckled softly to myself. These miners, playing with fire, had burnt their fingers with a vengeance.

"And you mean to say you haven't kicked against it yet?"

"We've tried to kick, sir; but they're all armed with them nasty little pistols; and we 'aven't 'ad 'alf a chawnce."

"How many of you in a shift?"

"Six on us."

"And how many officers?"

"One to every two on us; but there's more on duty up above, as a sort of reserve, sir."

"I see. So if we could scupper each of the officers in turn, we should still have some of them to tackle up on top?"

"That's right, sir."

"How many of them?"

"I don't rightly know, sir; there seems plenty on 'em."

"Half a dozen—a dozen?"

"I don't rightly know, sir."

I had food for thought now. "Well, Bates, I'll think it over," I said after a minute or two; "and you can doss down for a bit."

"Very good, sir," Bates replied; and without more ado, I believe, he went to sleep. Anyhow I heard

again, from time to time, the stifled snores which I could just distinguish above the sound of the water.

Well, I thought it out; and my plans were as follows: We would lie in our cubby-hole until a carrying party came down. We would wait till their return journey. Then Bates and I would jump out on the officer, scupper him and get the two miners to join us or knock them out if they refused. We would then go openly up the tunnel, scupper the next officer we came to and get the miners to join us—get up the ladder while the case of pistols was being hauled up—or better still, wait till relieved, scupper the officer, and get the miners of the relief party to join us. Then go up the ladder openly as if returning from our spell of duty. The whole thing must be done silently; there must be no pistol shots, no cries. We should have to kill the officers; we could not afford to tie them up and risk having them give the alarm. Besides, we had no rope. I was about to wake up Bates and tell him my plans, when it struck me that I had better overhaul them again, and think them out from the point of view of the enemy.

Baker, who appeared to be the leader, was no fool. He knew that we were somewhere about in here or had escaped to give the alarm. Now what would he do?

If he thought that we had escaped he would probably bolt with his officers and such miners as

he could trust, killing the disaffected men on the principle of "dead men tell no tales."

If he thought we were still in the workings he would take special precautions to prevent our escape and merely starve us out. He might, or might not, search for us.

If he were in doubt as to whether we were still in the workings or whether we had escaped—what would he do then?

He was physically bold enough. Was his moral courage equal to his physical? Never underrate your adversary, was one of the maxims I had learnt as a soldier. I would assume that it was. Very good then. He would not ruin his business until certain that we had escaped. He would have all in readiness to bolt—motor cars waiting, his officers armed and ready to get into them at short notice, the miners down below. He would make enquiries outside. He would be given ample time in which to make good his retreat; he would—if I knew anything of our authorities—be given plenty of warning. In the first instance, the village policeman would arrive with his notebook and pencil. Three days later an inspector of mines would appear.

Certainly, Baker would not bolt until he knew for certain that we had escaped and given the alarm.

In the meantime, until he was certain, what precautions would he take to prevent our escape?

Well, he would argue the thing out much as I had

done. He would quickly recognise that starvation would force us to move within forty-eight hours or so. He would, of course, warn all his officers and double his guards. He would certainly have one or two spies amongst the miners—men who pretended to be disaffected, but were not—and he would organise the shifts so as to separate the disaffected from each other so far as possible.

Our one chance was that he had not thought out the problem quite so quickly as I had; or that his temperament—an impatient temperament, as I judged it to be—would not permit him to sit down and wait, but would send him off with a party of officers to search for us through the network of ancient workings. More than that, he was the sort of man who could ill brook even a temporary set-back. His vanity would have suffered a nasty shock by our escape. If I had judged the man aright, he would not rest until he had tracked us down and had us lying at his feet to be taunted prior to execution.

So the sooner we made our move the better.

But here it was, now eight o'clock in the morning, and no carrying party had come down. Perhaps Baker had stopped the party. That was probable. A certain amount of disorganisation must have resulted from the death of Sullivan and Thomas, the disappearance of Bates, to say nothing of the damage sustained by two or three of the officers.

I wondered at what hour the reliefs took place. Pretty certain to be at four, eight and twelve o'clock. So we ought not to expect the first carrying party much before a quarter to nine or so.

I let Bates sleep on and dozed a bit myself. At eight-thirty I got up to the spy hole, as much to see how my leg felt as to reconnoitre. The latter was useless indeed until some one should come along with a lantern. We trusted to the light showing in the spy hole to give us warning. My movement, however, woke Bates up on the instant. I told him what I was doing. To my delight I found that my leg was very much better for the rest and the bandage.

I then told Bates my plans and asked him if the relief took place at eight o'clock. Yes, it did. Then I gave him his orders. He was to watch through the spy hole when the carrying party came past and spot whether the miners were men whom we could trust; also whether there were one or two guards with them and the formation in which they moved. That was all; and we lay down again and waited. Then an idea struck me and I asked him which was the nearest place where food was kept. He said that most of the miners brought down a hunk of bread and cheese with them; but that the food was kept up above the mine and the rations sent down as required to the miners' living-room. That meant that we must fight our way through before we could get any grub.

It was just about a quarter to nine when the tell-tale metallic clink of nailed boots on rock told us of the approach of a carrying party. Bates, silently as a cat, got up to the spy hole, while I crawled to the entrance to count the number of the party. There were four of them. I could see their feet only. The leading man moved with the light, springy step that I had seen before, only he was limping badly; he wore tennis shoes. It was the Jew again. I thought I had half-killed him. The next two wore nailed boots. The last man wore brown-leather shoes. Two guards and two carriers. So Baker had doubled his guards; and the probability was that both the miners were disaffected men whom we could trust. Otherwise why should he have doubled the guards of this carrying party?

After they had passed, I crept back to hear Bates' report. One of the miners only, he said, was trustworthy from our point of view. The other he was in doubt of.

So now I explained to Bates our plan of campaign. We must down the two guards, and, if necessary, the untrustworthy miner. I would get out of the cubby-hole, go up the tunnel about twenty yards or so and blot out myself behind a slight projection in the wall. I would take the leading guard. Bates was to lie at the entrance of the cubby-hole until they had passed him and take the rear guard. But

if he heard me engaged he must come out whether the guards had passed or not. I would not use my pistol unless obliged, though there was not much danger in doing so at this distance from the mine head. I impressed on Bates that the guards must be killed or so severely damaged that they would be unable to walk or talk for a week at least. We must also take pistols and torches and any food they had on them. It was for him also to explain the situation to the two miners and get them to join us.

"Very good, sir," said Bates when I had finished. He took it all as part of the day's work, in the most matter-of-fact fashion.

Well, everything panned out admirably. I went to my post about the time that I thought the party would be returning. Presently I saw the light of a lantern and heard the metallic clink of boots. I squeezed as close to the wall as possible. The light came on steadily and the leading man rounded the corner. I saw the startled look in his face as I sprang at him. He held the lantern out at arm's length towards me, I suppose with some idea of warding off the impending blow, and turned his head aside. My fist crashed on his jaw with all the strength I could muster. He fell back against the wall, the back of his head hitting it with a crack like a pistol-shot. I had polished off the Jew this time at all events. I was on him in a twinkling,

gripping his throat and feeling in his pocket for his shooter. We were in pitch darkness, for the falling lantern had gone out. I got hold of the pistol and heard Bates' voice say, "It's all right, mates." Then came the light of a match, while I switched on the torch. I found the lantern and lit it. Then I examined my "kill." The man was not dead, but devilish near it. It was the smack on the back of his head which had done it. I had nearly throttled him into the bargain. Bates had done for his man too. He had, apparently, seized him and beaten his head against the wall.

"It's all right, mates," said Bates again.

"Wot be you a-doin' of?" one of the miners asked sternly. "Why, it's Bates!" said the other. The two had dropped the case of pistols and stood in attitudes of self-defence expecting, evidently, to be attacked.

"It's all right, mates," said Bates for the third time, expectorating. It was his method of explaining the situation. So I had to intervene. I told them who I was, how I had come there and that Bates and I were fighting for our lives. I then asked them to join us. Bates stood there silently, leaning his vast bulk against the wall. But one of the carriers laughed. "Not much," he said. I then described how Thomas had been murdered and asked them if they had really joined up with such a dirty gang of assassins. This led

to a conference between the two miners. It was the first they had heard of Thomas' death. The news decided one of them; but the other still held out, talking some political tosh or other about self-determination, nationalisation and other nonsense. Bates stood there looking on and making no attempt to bring the waverer round to our side. We were losing valuable time; so presently I said rather angrily to Bates, "Come along, Bates, we must get a move on; we can't wait here all day."

"Very good, sir," Bates replied, stepping close to the waverer. "Mate," he said, "you'd best join us." He spat into his hands. "I don't 'old with this 'ere cold-blooded murder," he added; "but——"

"It's orl right, matey," replied the politician, hastily. "No more don't I 'old with it. I'm wiv you orl right."

But I could see that the man was half-hearted and would let us down in a scrap. He was the sort who would join the winning side. We wanted him, however, to help carry up the case of rifles. It was essential to arrive at the end of the tunnel as if nothing had occurred. Our object was to be mistaken in the dim light for the identical party which had originally gone down to the coast. So I told the two carriers to take up the case and follow me, while Bates was to bring up the rear. The carriers were to take the case of rifles straight to

the pulley, leaving Bates and me to deal with the gun-men. I prayed that there might be but two of them.

Well, we were in luck; there was only one of them; and he was standing with his back to us as we came into the underground chamber. He was watching two miners who were fixing up a case of pistols. The lantern was on the ground at his feet. As I walked towards him, he turned and glanced at us, then again fixed his attention on the pulley. It was clear that he had had trouble, for his pistol was in his hand, while on the floor was a splintered case. The two miners were working in the surly fashion which I knew so well. These two would prove to be friends. The body of poor Thomas had been chucked into a corner of the chamber.

I crept up behind the gun-man, beckoning to Bates, setting the lantern on the floor as I went, and seized his hand, wrenching the pistol from his grasp. Bates was on him and hit him a smashing blow on the nape of his neck. The man was down and out without a sound. Then Bates went and talked to the two miners, who had merely stared, open-mouthed, at us. There was no trouble with them. One of them merely spat into his hands and awaited orders; while the other gave Bates a resounding and congratulatory smack on the shoulder which would have felled any average ox. The case of pistols was just swaying through the trap; and our two carriers

brought up their case and placed it in position. An instant later the pulley came swinging down again. I whispered to the man who had smacked Bates' shoulder to go up in the pulley, beckoned to Bates and walked to the ladder. But Bates stepped in front of me. "There's two on 'em up there, sir," he said; "better let me go fust—I ain't bin 'urt."

That was wise; we did not want any shooting if we could help it. Though I am not altogether a weakling I hope, yet Bates was as strong as two of me, especially, handicapped as I was, with my wounded leg. I could also back him up with the pistol if need be. So I let Bates go first. But I did not like it; I felt that I ought to be in front. It was this feeling which was my undoing. For I backed him up very closely, climbing the perpendicular ladder immediately below him, with the pistol in my right hand, and holding on to the ladder with my groggy left hand only.

Bates bided his time, climbing the ladder so as to reach the top at the same time as the man in the pulley.

I am not an expert at ladders; and I found it extremely difficult to climb this one with only one hand available.

I took no part at all in the ensuing encounter—at least, none of which to be proud.

Bates climbed till his eyes were on a level with the

floor above. My head was about the level of his knees.

The man in the pulley was swayed aloft, gripped the floor and scrambled out. There was a flourish of Bates' legs ; the iron-shod heel of his boot caught me in the mouth, knocking out some of my teeth and nearly breaking my neck. The blow drove me clean off my perch and I fell about six feet, I suppose, on to the broad of my back, my head striking the rocky floor with a wumph.

Every particle of sense was knocked clean out of me ; and, for the time being, I was dead to the world.

CHAPTER VIII

IN FULL CRY

JACK SAUNDERSON'S ADVENTURE

How long I lay stunned I have not the foggiest notion. It could only have been for a few minutes, I think, though at the time untold ages seemed to roll past, whilst I endeavoured to recover my wits. I became dimly aware that a thunderstorm was in progress. There were constant flashes of lightning accompanied by thunder-cracks. By degrees it dawned on me that a pistol fight was in full swing. But for these flashes I was in pitch darkness. A scraping noise commenced on the wall close beside me. A brilliant but momentary shaft of light suddenly shot out past me, lighting up wall and ladder. The latter was being hauled up. Two men jumped past me and seized the bottom of the ladder. One of them, stumbling over me, kicked me hard in the ribs. More pistol-shots rang out. The flash of these lit up a man's face in the middle of the cavern. It was Baker. At the same

moment I heard his voice. "Hold on to the ladder," he said very calmly.

So then I guessed what had happened. My friends had captured the landing up above. Baker, who, with a party had probably been searching for Bates and me, had then come on the scene. My friends were trying to pull the ladder up; Baker's party were trying to get possession of it. The end of the fight came almost at once. There was dead silence and pitch darkness for a minute; but I heard the hard breathing of the men who were hanging on to the ladder. A torch flashed out, lighting up the trap above, and a pistol-shot rang out simultaneously. There was a groan and a man toppled head foremost through the trap, falling with a heavy thud close beside me. That chap, whoever he was, was past mending.

Two men stumbled back over me, dragging the ladder down with them. So Baker's party had won. Not altogether, though; for I recognised Bates' voice up above, which shouted, "Down with the trap!" Then there was a loud thunderclap as the trap-door was slammed down. Two more loud slams told me that cases of pistols had been thrown on to the top of the trap.

Baker and his crew were fairly bottled; but—so was I!

They would light up lanterns in a minute. Then I should be done. I had better clear off while I

could. I rose to my feet silently, and felt my way along the wall towards the passage. Some one struck a match, and I darted to the opening. I was, however, just too late to escape unnoticed.

"Who's that?" Baker asked as the match went out. He flashed his torch into the passage, and must have caught a glimpse of me as I ran.

One of the others lit the lantern.

"There's one on 'em still down here," said a voice, which I recognised as that of the politician miner; "I see'd 'im fall off the ladder when the rest went up."

"And who the hell are you?" said Baker, turning in a fury and flashing his torch in the miner's face.

I had scurried round my corner, feeling for my pistol. But I had dropped it when I fell. My torch was, however, in my pocket, which was something to be thankful for. I stopped and listened and watched.

"I be Jim Morgan," replied the politician in a whining voice, "and I see'd the whole thing."

"Oh, you did, did you?" said Baker.

There were five of them in there, including the miner. There was the man of the Homburg hat, and two others whom I had not seen before. I thought Baker was about to kill the politician out of hand. But he thought better of it, and made the man tell his story instead. Out it all came—

perfectly true, except that the miner averred that he had been marched up the tunnel at the end of a pistol, and had been purposely left behind when the other mutineers—as he called them—had gone up the ladder. He described what had occurred, how that when Bates had sprung up from the ladder a pistol-shot had been fired, and that I had fallen, shot, as he supposed. He explained that I was a stranger, whom he had never seen before, walking with a bad limp.

"And he's down here still, you say?" Baker asked.

"Yus, mister; he's the one who bolted down that there tunnel."

"Then we'll get him," said Baker, turning to the man of the hat with a smile. If I had only had the pistol I could have killed him with pleasure there and then. And I could see the pistol lying close to the spot at which I had fallen.

There were no answering smiles on the faces of the gun-men. "What's to be done?" the man in the Homburg hat enquired. For answer, Baker walked close up to him and spoke in an undertone. All four of the gun-men were now close together in the middle of the cavern. As they were talking one of them turned round and glanced in my direction, with, as I thought, rather a scared look; then hastily looked away again on a word from Baker. But he had given away the subject of

their conversation. That set me wondering what I was to do. There was really but one thing to be done. If they came after me I must run for it. My cubby-hole was denied me; for the two men Bates and I had knocked out in the first instance had been left lying just outside it, and a very short search would disclose it. Jim Morgan, the miner, moreover, must know that we had been hidden just at that point, and he would certainly give it away. No, my game was to watch them as long as they remained where they were; to retreat in front of them down the tunnel if they came that way; and to follow them up if they turned off to the right.

I might manage to recover the pistol.

In the meantime Baker had evidently told them his plans, whatever they were. I would have given my skin to know them. Then Baker walked back to the miner and a whispered conversation ensued, while the other three looked on. Finally the miner was ordered into the furthest corner of the cavern and told to sit down. The man began to protest, his voice rising to almost a scream. He put his hands together and sank down on his knees. Baker angrily ordered him to the corner, and admonished him with the pistol; upon which the man grovelled along the floor towards him, screaming. It was a terrible spectacle. But somehow I did not believe that Baker intended to kill

him; it struck me at the time that it was a little play-acting to induce me to come out—as I had come forward once before in Bates' case. Anyhow, I was not to be drawn on this occasion. They might kill the man for all I cared.

Ultimately Baker pacified him, telling him that he would come to no harm if he would but do as he was ordered. The man went to the corner and lay down, hiding his head in his arms. The man in the Homburg hat and one other sat down at the side of the cavern, whence they could keep an eye both on the tunnel and on Morgan; while Baker, switching on a torch and leading the way, together with the fourth gun-man, suddenly walked briskly in my direction. I cleared off in front of them down the tunnel, keeping at such a distance that I could just see the glimmer of the torch. I had the idea in my head that Baker was after me. But he came along quickly without stopping to even look into either of the two passages. I had made sure that he would have turned down one of these. Then I thought that he was adopting his former ruse of trying to catch me between the two parties, and that he would suddenly turn back. But not a bit of it. The two came on at a quick pace straight down the tunnel, and I was obliged to hurry to keep ahead of them. I looked at the two men Bates and I had laid out. The one I had gone for was lying there insensible and breathing

stertorously; the other also was half dead. Baker stopped for a minute only to examine them. I stood as close as I dared to watch him. He barely glanced at the bed of the stream, and made no attempt to search for the cubby-hole. Yet he must have known that Bates and I had hidden up somewhere at this point. Instead of looking for our hiding-place he came straight on down the tunnel at his former quick pace, and I had to run to get my distance.

Presently I came to the waterfall at the junction of the stream with the tunnel, and turned up the passage to the bunker. I had no notion of being caught in the cave by the sea. I watched from a short distance up the passage. Baker came along first, showing the light in front of him, while his companion followed close behind him. The two, walking very quickly, passed the entrance to my passage without so much as glancing up it, and continued straight down towards the sea. I ran to the entrance of the passage, and looked up and down the tunnel. I hesitated to follow them, thinking that Baker was still at his old game of catching me between the two parties, and that the man in the Homburg hat, with his companion, was following down the tunnel. It was this piece of stupidity which cost me dear. I waited for a minute or two only; then decided to chance it and follow Baker, for the idea struck me for the first time that he was on his

way round to the mine head by the coast cavern. I ran after him and arrived just too late. As I rounded the last corner about twenty yards from the cave I caught a gleam of light for a second and heard a loud clang, or rather dull crash as of rock meeting rock. Then there was pitch darkness and silence except for the swish of water. I waited there, holding my breath, listening, for, I should think, ten minutes. Then holding my torch at arm's length to one side, I switched it on and examined the cave. There were the petrol tins and pistol cases; there was also the skeleton, but there was no Baker. I hurried into the cave, stepping very carefully, however, on stones to avoid leaving a trail, and examined the sand for footmarks. There they were, two pairs of them, leading straight down the bed of the stream into the sea-ripples which were washing into the cave under the big rock. If only the tide had been out I could have followed these footsteps to the exact point at which Baker and his companion had left the cave. As it was, their footprints had been obliterated as they were formed by the wash of the wavelets. There was the blank wall staring me in the face; and there, up above me, when I switched off the torch, I could see daylight through the crack in the roof. There must be some trick, some secret spring, a sort of open sesame business, which operated the stone which blocked the hole

in the roof; and there must also be some means of climbing up to it, some ladder which dropped down when the hole opened.

Well, I felt a pretty fool. Here had I missed my opportunity of discovering the secret entrance to this cave, and all through my own stupidity and nervous fears. I was ashamed of myself, and thought how contemptuous Baker would be if he knew of my imbecility. That idea, of course, made me very savage; and I longed for a chance to reinstate myself in my own good opinion.

I sat down in the sea-water to soak the bandage on my wound, and washed the back of my head. I felt much better for it, and set to work to fathom Baker's plans.

Why had not he and his companion gone by the cross-passages, the route by which they had intercepted me, instead of all the way round by the coast?

With a little thought, the reason became clear. Baker wished to get back to the mine head as quickly as possible to organise the gun-men and head off Bates. The route by the cross-passages would probably take him merely into the long passage on the upper level between the chamber and the mine head; and if he went that way he might well be caught by Bates and his crowd.

So if I now went by the cross-passages I might be able to rejoin Bates. I ought, of course, to

have bolted that way instead of coming all this way down to the coast. That was why Baker had not attempted to search for me. He had assumed that I had gone to join Bates. But it was possible, probable indeed, that he had left instructions with the other three to ferret me out. They might be after me now. Anyhow the sooner I got out of this cul-de-sac on the coast the better. I should be fairly bottled if they followed me down here. Also, I must certainly manage to join Bates, if only to warn him that Baker had gone round to the mine head. I hurried back up the tunnel. I avoided using my torch, as I might meet the Homburg hat man at any moment. It was lucky I did so, for as I approached my cubby-hole I saw a light ahead of me. There were the three of them, two gun-men and the miner, Morgan.

I stalked them, and found they were doctoring the two fellows Bates and I had knocked out.

I wondered what I should do now. I must get past them somehow.

Presently one of the gun-men and the miner picked up the Jew I had "done in," and started away up the tunnel. The man in the Homburg hat, however, remained behind with Bates' "kill."

Now was my chance.

There was a lantern on the floor, and the man in the hat had dragged the other fellow close to the stream, and was washing his head when I rushed him.

We had both been damaged. He was a big, heavy man, on the fat side, while I was in hard condition. Nevertheless, I think he would have got the better of me, for I had been more badly hurt than he, but for the surprise of my attack. He looked up just in time to avoid the blow I aimed at him; but I got him down, with my right hand on his throat and my left gripping his right wrist to prevent him from getting the pistol, which I knew he had in his pocket.

We lay there and fought, gazing into each other's eyes by the dim light of the lantern, I squeezing his throat for all I was worth, he wriggling his head to escape my grip, striking at my face with his fist, and rolling this way and that, trying to upset my balance.

I got my right knee on the biceps of his left arm, and in his struggles he kicked over the lantern.

At last I got my left knee on his right arm, searched for and found his pistol. Then only I relaxed my grip on his throat, and examined him by the light of my torch. He was limp and insensible, and I was satisfied that nothing was to be feared from him for about a week at least.

I wasted no time but picked up the lantern and set off up the tunnel. I meant to shoot the other gun-man before going to join Bates, for I was seeing red.

I came up with them just as they were entering the big chamber. The miner, Morgan, was leading

with a lantern slung to his elbow, carrying the legs of the damaged man, while the gun-man was carrying his head. I took a pot-shot at the latter from a distance of about four yards. He collapsed all in a heap with a shriek.

I did not stop to see if he were dead, or to bother about the miner, but turned back, took the second of the two passages to the right, so as to avoid the mine shaft, came to the cross-roads where Baker had caught me, and turned to my right. I lit the lantern, as this was new ground to me.

In about a quarter of a mile I came to another cross-passage. I turned to the right again, extinguishing my lantern and moving with great caution. I climbed up a steep slope; and about a hundred yards further arrived at a big tunnel, the main one evidently, on the higher level.

But as I stuck out my head there was a flash to my left, and a bullet whistled close by my head with a crack that nearly deafened me. For the moment I thought it had been fired at me, but the next instant I was disabused, for there was an answering report to my right. It was followed by a fusillade from both directions. I had arrived too late. To my right were the miners; to my left the revolutionaries, and the latter were much closer to me than the former.

The miners had evidently failed to get through —were being driven back, indeed, as was apparent

a minute later; for the light of a torch flashed past me, and half a dozen pistol-shots were fired within a few yards to my left. But one pistol spoke in reply. A man with a torch skipped into the entrance of my passage within a yard of me, and turned his light down the tunnel. His back was towards me, and I shot him. Out went the light as he fell forward into the tunnel, where he lay groaning. I hoped it was Baker, but it was not. The light of another torch was turned on him. He was a stranger. The firing had ceased. I thought I heard whispering. At all events I heard some one spring past the entrance to my passage. I just had time to wonder what they were up to, when a voice said, "Now!" and I was dazed by pistols fired right into my face. How they missed me I don't know, and neither do I know how I got back to the cross-passages. Stunned and stupefied I took cover round the corner, and only then became aware that a bullet had laid my cheek open and another had grazed my left arm.

I was not given time in which to recover. A light shone past me. I looked round the corner, and a couple of bullets just missed my head before I could withdraw it. I pointed my pistol round the corner with my left hand, but before I could fire it bullets whistled past, one of them hitting my hand, as I thought at the time. Anyhow, my pistol was knocked out of my grasp. They were on to

me in an instant, and I turned and ran for it. As I went I was bathed in a brilliant light from behind, and bullets cracked past me. Fortunately the passage was, I suppose, not quite straight, and there were interludes when I blundered along in the darkness.

It was the sound of water which brought me to my senses. I had reached the stream which ran through my cubby-hole. I turned in and crawled up the bed of it, more in the hope of finding some place of temporary security than with any definite design. Once in my cubby-hole I lay down and licked my wounds. I found that my hand was not much damaged. The bullet must have hit my pistol, the splinters gashing my hand and wrist, and the jar of it paralysing my arm for the time being. The beautiful cold water put it more or less to rights, and restored some of my energy.

My only chance now of rejoining Bates' crowd was to go up to the chamber and attract their attention by shouting; and the sooner I started the better. In tribulation of both body and spirit I crawled out into the tunnel. The sense of loneliness in these awful vaults was again weighing me down, and I was forced to summon up all my courage to triumph over the intense desire for human companionship—even that of my enemies!

I stumbled and nearly fell over a body, switched on my light, and found it was the man in the Homburg hat. He was lying exactly as I had

left him ; he was still alive. I walked up the tunnel; but I had not gone more than a hundred yards when I saw a light in front of me. It was coming towards me. I retreated past my cubby-hole, in doubt whether I had to do with miners or gun-men. They stopped on seeing the two figures lying there. They were gun-men with Morgan, the miner. There were three of the former, but Baker was not amongst them. It was the miner who spotted me and gave the alarm. Then the hunt recommenced. I fled down the tunnel, intent on turning up towards the churchyard bunker without their knowledge.

I was running, or rather stumbling, along, very nearly done, the torch in my pocket, feeling my way along by the wall, and listening for the sound of the waterfall, which would tell me when I was nearing the bunker passage.

As I rounded a bend in the tunnel I heard the sound of the little waterfall, and at the same instant saw a light. I was caught—fairly caught—between two parties.

So this was the end.

I stood there hesitating, watching the flickering light, and wondering how they could have headed me off. It was Baker, of course, who had returned by the cave. He had completely outwitted me.

But the light appeared to be stationary. There was something queer about it. What I mean is,

it was not moving up the tunnel; it was as though some one were standing against the wall, examining the opposite wall with a torch. Then I suddenly saw an extraordinary thing. For an instant, as the light moved, a beautiful little rainbow appeared. I now knew all about it. Some one was in the bed of the stream, but behind the rock wall, looking through the hole through which the water gushed; and it must be the light shining through the spray which made the rainbow.

I still had a chance—yes, and a very good chance too. For they could not get out at the waterfall; of that I was certain. If I could but get past the little waterfall without being spotted, the party behind it, in the bed of the stream, would probably swear that I had not passed that way, and the search would be diverted back to the cubby-hole and the passages off the main tunnel.

I had evidently distanced my pursuers in the tunnel in spite of my game leg and being obliged to run in the dark while they had a lantern. Fear, there is no doubt about it, lends a man wings. I remember during the great war, at the end of it, we chased a party of Bosches. We ran as hard as we could to catch them, but they simply left us standing. And on another occasion during the big German push in 1918, one morning in the early dawn, a small party of us, isolated, suddenly became panic-stricken, thinking the Bosches had got behind

us. We pulled ourselves together when we had run about a hundred yards; but, Lord! we covered that distance in record time. Ten seconds! It was more like one second! We simply flew!

Well, in this case I dare say these gun-men behind me were in doubt whether I was armed, and so moved cautiously—doubtful, perhaps, whether they had really seen me at all. Anyhow there was no sign of their lantern when I reached the waterfall.

The stream issued, as I think I have already said, from a hole about two feet above the floor. It gushed out, falling in a little curve, and striking the floor about a foot away from the wall. The man in the bed of the stream, on the other side of the wall, had reached through the hole as far as he could, and was turning the torch this way and that. Fortunately he could not reach quite far enough to get the business end of the torch out into the tunnel, and about a couple of feet of the floor close under the wall was in shadow. It was along that little strip of shadow that I must worm my way. More than that, I must keep so close to the wall that the water would not fall on me. For if it did it would splash up and give me away.

I went down on my stomach and crawled inch by inch, pulling myself along with my hands, hardly daring to use my legs. It is a difficult thing to do, especially when, as in this case, the wet and slippery rock gave little or nothing to grip hold of.

Still I negotiated it all right, though it must have taken me a minute or two. I heard a voice say in reply to some question which I did not catch, "No, we'll wait here till Joseph comes; he ought not to be long now."

The words were indeed hardly out of his mouth, and my feet were barely clear of the water, when I heard a shout in the tunnel behind me.

"Rafferty—Rafferty!"

"Hullo!" from inside the wall.

"Has he passed along here?"

"No!"

"Well, he's done for Defreetas" (or some such name—the man in the Homburg hat, presumably), "and we thought we saw him bolt——"

I lost the rest of it; for, as you may imagine, I was crawling along close to the wall as fast as ever I could. I would have given a lot to have been a centipede at that moment. Fortunately the bright shaft of light from the electric torch, striking right across the passage, must have served to hide me completely from my pursuers on the far side of it.

I reached the mouth of the bunker passage, turned up it, scrambled along it for about ten yards or so to where there was a slight bend in it, and lay there panting. You must remember that I had had no food, except a mouthful of bread and cheese, since my fall into the bunker cavern.

Presently I saw a light in the tunnel. It flashed and disappeared. Then I saw the steady light of a lantern. The next instant Jim Morgan appeared. He was carrying the lantern. He was hugging the wall and moving jerkily from one projection to another. He was evidently scared out of his wits.

Close behind him were two others with pistols in their hands, taking cover behind the miner. All three were in a blue funk, thinking, doubtless, that I was armed. They spotted my passage, and they made the miner look into it. They then passed on down the tunnel towards the coast cavern.

I lay there for half an hour, wondering what I was to do. Then another party appeared coming down the tunnel, and stopped at the entrance to my passage. Here they were joined by the first lot returning from the coast cavern. There must have been six or seven of them.

Then one with a torch in his hand crawled into my passage, and another followed him.

There was nothing for it but to retreat, make the best use of the start I had gained, and push on to the churchyard bunker. That was the rendezvous I had given to Bates in case we became separated; and if he managed to escape that is where he would look for me. But there was little chance of that, for Baker had evidently got the better of him and his crowd.

I finally discarded the idea of building up the

cases of rifles and trying by that means to escape from the cave. I should not be given the chance. As a matter of fact, I was so exhausted that I doubted whether I any longer had the strength to shift these heavy cases single-handed. No, I would revert to my original plan, try to get under the church during the evening service, and make my presence known by shouting. I was not greatly enamoured of the idea; still it was about my only chance—the only chance, too, of saving Bates. If it failed—well, I might yet find some way out of these passages.

If only I could let people know that I were buried down here? They would be playing golf again on Monday morning, and I might make myself heard from the churchyard bunker. I wondered what the weather was like, and prayed to Heaven that it might be fine in the morning. Suppose it were a day of driving mist and rain—what then? I should just have to wait until the rain ceased.

But John would begin making enquiries about me if I did not turn up on Monday afternoon; though, of course, it would never enter his head that I had fallen in here. My only chance was to communicate with them somehow. I thought of telepathy and brain waves. Sore and miserable as I was, the idea made me laugh. I remembered that we had discussed it, and that Maude and Margery believed in it.

But other matters required my attention.

The first thing was to escape from these blood-thirsty devils. I had been walking up my passage. I knew I was in the right one by the babbling of the brook close alongside me. Ultimately I reached a cavern—the cavern of the fairy voices as I called it. These now stood me in good stead; for I could not remember which of the two tunnels to take. Both of them had silted up with sand since I had been there before. But the voices in one of them guided me. I found, I remember, great difficulty in climbing up a steep slope at a corner, for the sand was deep and I kept slipping back. I hit my head against the top of the passage too. I began to think I must have gone wrong. But lying still for a minute to rest, I heard the voices again. They cheered me up immensely, for they told me I was on the right road. I pushed on with renewed vigour, but I required all my courage. The sand was blowing strongly in my face, into my mouth and eyes. It was very deep and soft, much more so than when I had come down the tunnel originally. It was a great labour pushing through it. I felt I must hurry, for it was evident that these passages were filling up with sand. I began to fear that I should not get through, that I should be cut off from the bunker, and to speculate as to what I should do if that proved to be the case. There would be nothing for it but to get

back to the cavern by the sea—then, I supposed, give myself up and throw myself on the mercy of Baker and his cut-throats.

At last, to my great delight, I came to a cavern which I recognised. Here was the stone wall close beside me; there was the trickle of water; but where were my tracks in the sand? The sand in this cave, I remembered, had been firm and moist. Yet now it was soft and thick, two feet deep at least. The roof was not more than four feet above it. This chamber also was silting up.

There were two passages leading out of it. Which was my road? It required a great effort of memory to call to mind the one at which I had listened for an echo. Then there was the built-up wall which had been facing me when I first came into this cavern.

I was feeling deadly tired, and longed to lie down and sleep. But that meant death; for the sand was blowing in by the passage opposite me. If that passage were blocked I should be finished.

I had a long drink, which did me good; but I had to scoop away nearly two feet of sand before I could make anything like a basin which would hold water.

I thought I would have a look at the third passage before I left. It would not do to miss a possible chance of getting out. I went across to investigate. My light showed me that this passage was very

nearly silted up. I worked down it a short distance, to find that there was a block of sorts in it, and that sand was banking up very quickly. This tunnel would soon be filled up, I supposed; the draught would then cease, and the sand would stop blowing. I got out of this tunnel in rather a hurry. I had no wish to be sanded up in it. It was extraordinary the pace at which it was filling up. As I again reached the cavern I came to the conclusion that there were other outlets somewhere. More than that, the sand was swirling about and the draught was very much stronger. The wind was getting up doubtless. This cavern would soon fill with sand at this rate. I had better get out of it quickly.

Then I remembered the side tunnel on my way to this cavern, and that the floor at that point was much closer to the roof than elsewhere. Perhaps that tunnel also, my homeward tunnel, was silting up and cutting off my retreat. In rather a panic I started towards the bunker hole, but pulled myself together and decided to take another good drink before I left. If this cavern or the tunnel by which I had come were to fill up with sand I should not be able to get back to the water. So I hollowed out my basin again and filled myself literally to the very brim.

I started off again, moving at a good steady pace, but before I had gone far I began to hasten.

There was no doubt that the tunnel was silting up —the floor of it was a good two feet closer to the roof. I now shoved along as fast as I could; it seemed hours, and I was dripping with perspiration before I reached the side tunnel. I was only just in time. A very strong draught, carrying quantities of sand, was blowing down it. At the point where it met the draught coming down the main tunnel—the one leading to the churchyard bunker—there was an eddy, a regular whirlpool of sand. It was at this point that the sand was banking up rapidly. In fact, the tunnel to the bunker was almost filled. The sand floor was within a foot of the roof. Another hour or so would have seen it blocked, and I should have had difficulty in finding the outlet at all. I thanked my stars that I had not given way to my desire for sleep. I debated whether I should take the side tunnel. There was such a strong draught coming down it that there must be an outlet to the open air at the end of it. But I was really too fagged to explore or to take chances. My one idea was to get back to the churchyard bunker and sleep. Also I was obsessed with my arrangement with Bates. I must, on no account, fail him at the rendezvous I had given him.

So I plunged at the main tunnel—into the midst of the whirlpool. I took a long breath, shut my eyes and mouth, and scraped away for all the

world like a terrier at a rabbit hole. And like a terrier I had to back out periodically to take breath, for the light sand swirled all round me. The air was thick with it. Any attempt to breathe in it resulted in a fit of coughing and choking, which, in my damaged condition, made my head throb terribly. It was as if a devil with a sledge-hammer was beating on my brain.

For a distance of fifteen yards, or more, I had to force my way, fighting through the sand; and I went through a bad half hour wondering whether I should succeed, or whether I had better turn, while I could and get back to the coast cavern.

Up till this time I had regarded my experiences as an adventure, a practical joke on the part of fortune—at the worst, a nightmare—of the happy outcome of which there could, of course, be no doubt. But now, during my struggle with the sand, I felt that I was up against, not only the revolutionaries but some cold-blooded, devilish and inhuman assassin who set traps for the unwary and had already murdered the poor fellows who had disappeared in former years.

Sir Charles' yarn of the monster of the buried village came to mind. Was I really fighting some demon—some malevolent genius?

This notion, wild though it was, of a tangible adversary did me good; it braced me.

I fought through it. The tunnel opened out

before me; and my way seemed clear to the churchyard bunker. I thought I had passed the danger points. I felt I had beaten my enemy on this occasion at least; I had won the first round.

I reached the bunker cavern without further trouble, though I could hardly crawl. I lay down to rest, more thoroughly exhausted than ever I had been in the whole course of my life. I had sense enough to switch off my torch, and noticed in a dreamy fashion, but without attaching any significance to the fact, that there was no sign of light from the hole above me.

For a long time I lay there, continually changing my position in the hope of finding one that would ease my aches and pains and permit me to go to sleep. I wondered what the time was; but I was unequal to the task of switching on the torch to look at my watch. However, I wound up the latter and felt that I had done all that could possibly be demanded of me.

I did everything I could think of to make myself go to sleep. I tried playing round the links; but the seventh hole brought me back to my present predicament. So I turned my mind on to Margery, Maude and John. I visualised them at luncheon. I could see it all so clearly—the dining-room at the hotel with its little round tables and the dozen or so people all pegging away manfully at their food with the appetite born of the Cornish sea breezes,

very careful, like all British folk, to avoid speaking to their neighbours unless properly introduced or until forty-eight hours thorough inspection had given good reason to believe that they were both respectable and harmless. The two girls would be drinking white wine of sorts, or lemonade or ginger-beer, according to whether they were tired or not. John would have a jorum of beer—the sybarite !—and I could with difficulty only get water. I felt unaccountably annoyed with John for drinking that beer, when he ought to be searching for me. I worked myself up into quite a fit of anger—a nice sort of pal to leave me in this horrible predicament. I raged impotently, moved suddenly, and the resulting sharp twinge in my leg brought me to my senses. Fool that I was, worrying myself in this fashion when I ought to be overhauling my plans. I set to work to decide how long I would rest before starting for the church. But my thoughts switched off, in spite of me, to that dining-room. I saw Margery's pretty, eager face, the dark, wavy hair sprouting so beautifully from her forehead and temples. There was that curl just covering the top of her ear which I longed to kiss. Funny thing, I now knew that I had always wanted to kiss that curl from the first moment I saw it. Then there was her mobile mouth—I think that's the proper expression—the sort of mouth that is always ready to laugh, showing little pearly teeth—topping !

I wondered if she would be sorry at my absence; I wondered if she were fond of me. I wondered if I really stood in Baker's way. I would test her. I remembered that we all four had been talking about telepathy and thought-waves a day or two before. John and I were casting scorn on the idea. Maude had not much to say about it. But Margery was strong on the subject. Her theory was that if two people were sufficiently *en rapport*, and one of them was in a very tight place, he or she could communicate with the other, by thought-waves, even though they were separated by the whole wide world. It is a pretty idea

Well, here was I in a tight enough place in all conscience. I was also, as I now knew, fond enough of her to communicate with her even if she had been in another planet. The question was, did she like me well enough to be able to receive my thought-wave?

I would try.

But how was one to start?

The first thing, I supposed, was to see Margery clearly with my mind's eye.

Well, I could see her all right; but she was laughing and chattering, not at all in the mood to receive thought-waves. My mental appeal must have such power that it would break into her mood. How did one put power into a mental appeal?

I was speculating thus, not exactly in a ribald,

but, certainly, in an incredulous fashion. The idea had always seemed to me so absurd. Of course it was impossible to communicate with another person by thought-waves!

Lying there in the dark, gazing up above me, I suddenly appreciated the fact that the hole through which I had fallen was completely blocked, and that my hope of ultimate escape was slight indeed.

I think, and hope, that I am not more afraid of death than most men; but this was such a horrible way to die. It was only now that the full horror of my position struck me—that fear gripped me. Like my predecessor I was to disappear, and Margery would never know that I loved her. If I could only tell her!

And while I was lying here, dying by inches, that scoundrel Baker would have a free hand to make love to her.

The idea roused me to a state of positive frenzy; the demon of jealousy seized me.

I even beat and kicked savagely at the rocks, seeking to tear them asunder and open up a way of escape.

Ultimately I must have fallen, I suppose; but I remember making a last desperate appeal: "Margery, Margery—listen to me, help me. . . . Margery—darling—help me—or I shall die——"

CHAPTER IX

JOHN SAUNDERSON'S NARRATIVE

IF you remember, Maude, Margery and I were on our way to church on Sunday evening and were nearing the club house. We were, all three of us, very cheery, laughing and chattering about this, that and the other thing.

I had been chaffing Margery because Baker had so evidently fallen a victim to her charms the night before; and I was just saying that I was perfectly certain that we should find him waylaying us at the club.

"What nonsense you do talk John!" said Margery, and to my huge delight she blushed.

I slapped my leg and roared. It is not often one can take a rise out of Margery. And the more I laughed, the more deeply she blushed. I like to make her blush. She is extremely pretty at any time; but when she blushes!—ye gods!—Venus come back on earth to delight us poor mortals!

"You had better be careful you know, my dear girl," I said; "you had better be cautious—

playing with edged tools, you know—playing with edged tools."

"Do stop it John," said Maude.

"And what will poor old Jack say when he hears of it?" I asked.

On this Margery blushed more than ever, and to cover her confusion ran at me with her "brolly."

"That's no good," I said as I dodged her; "it's my duty as your brother-in-law——"

I got no further. For there was Baker standing at the front door of the club looking at us.

I whistled softly for Margery's benefit, as we resumed our society manners, and whispered under my breath, "I told you so."

"Do be quiet, John," Margery whispered back. "What a silly fool you are!"

It delighted me beyond measure to see the way in which she carried it off with Baker. She was still blushing; and there was no hiding the fact. But she started fanning herself with her handkerchief as though she was hot from walking fast. Maude did the same.

"You appear to be warm," said Baker, coming forward and taking off his hat.

"Yes, we are simply boiling; we have walked very fast," said Maude.

"We were afraid we should be late," Margery added.

As I constantly tell Maude, women simply don't know the difference between truth and falsehood.

We had been strolling along very slowly and were in ample time.

"We are on our way to church," I explained.

"Are you?" said Baker. "Why, I've a very good mind to come too."

"Oh, do," I urged, with a wink at Margery; "come and sit with us."

"Yes, do, Mr. Baker," said Margery rising to the occasion and with a little defiant nod of the head at me.

"But I haven't a book of the words," said Baker.

"That doesn't matter," said Margery; "John will be glad to let you look over his."

Damn the girl! She was getting the better of me. Fortunately the idea did not appeal at all to Baker.

"As a matter of fact," he said, somewhat hastily, "I had forgotten, but I must get back to the mine—I have some important work to do to-night."

He paused for a minute, then added with a slight laugh, which, however, seemed rather forced, "Besides, you see this black eye of mine—I doubt whether I could see to read."

We had, of course, noticed his eye. It was a roaring black eye—like an enormous over-ripe plum. We all sympathised and asked him how he had come by it. He said he had been kicked by mistake by a man climbing a ladder; and though he spoke calmly, yet I could see that he was furiously angry about it.

"What I really wanted," he continued, "was to fix up a return match with your cousin for to-morrow morning. Do you think he can take me on?"

"Jack's away," I replied; "and I'm afraid he won't be back till to-morrow about lunch time—if then."

"Oh, so he's not back yet?" He laughed, and it struck me that there was a queer inflexion in it; it sounded vicious, somehow. Maude and Margery noticed it too, I could see, for they both stared at him.

"I thought," he added, "that he was coming back to-night. However, I can easily fix up a game with him for another day."

"You had better take me on," I said; "and then if Jack doesn't come back to-morrow you can take his place in the afternoon in our usual foursome."

"Yes, do, Mr. Baker," said Margery, "that would be great fun," and she gave him a flash of her eyes that would have knocked most men endways.

Things were beginning to get a bit thick; and I began to regret my share in this performance. Women are devils. I hoped Jack would be back betimes—otherwise he would, it was likely, find his nose out of joint.

"By Jove! I must get my pipe," I said. "You had better push on; I'll catch you up."

I went into the club; and the last thing I saw as I passed through the doorway was Baker walking away between Maude and Margery. But his head was turned to Margery, while she was gazing up at him.

It struck me then that it was I who had been playing with edged tools.

Well, I took my pipe out of my golf coat.

There, hanging on the peg next to my coat was Jack's waterproof. The fool!—to go off for the week-end in this climate without a mackintosh!

Then I spotted his bag. There was no mistaking it; I knew it well. I had been in his room the day before when he had packed it. There was his stick too. I knew that well. He must have gone to Falmouth without any kit at all. How extraordinary.

I went out to rejoin Maude and Margery and overtook Mrs. Penryhn, who was also going to church. A bright thought struck me, and I asked her if a telegram had come for Jack the day before. No, none had come to her knowledge; but she said that Jack might have met the boy on the links and run off to catch the train. That, of course, was the explanation—there had been no time for him to go back to the club to pick up his kit.

I hurried after the two girls and told them of my discovery. Baker had disappeared. They both became quite uneasy and excited at my news; which seemed to me most absurd. Margery, I noticed, even turned pale and shivered. I

wondered what was the matter with her. I was going on to the church with them when Maude suggested that I should go instead and find out at the telegraph-office if a telegram had come for Jack. I demurred; but Margery backed her up with, "Oh, do, John. To please me," she added. That was irresistible; so I left them and walked on to the village, feeling slightly perturbed.

As I passed the station, which is about half a mile beyond the club house, I thought I would ask the station-master if Jack had gone to Falmouth the previous day. There are so few passengers travelling by this little branch-line that he would be sure to know. He was inclined to be a bit crusty at first, Sunday being an off day with him, until I explained that we were anxious about Jack. He had not seen him; and he was then all helpfulness; for the legends of unaccountable disappearances were always in the minds of the people of the neighbourhood.

We went down into the booking-office and saw that three tickets had been taken to Falmouth the day before. We then—for the station-master insisted on coming with me—went to the booking-clerk's cottage. The booking-clerk remembered quite well the three people who had gone to Falmouth. Two were women and the man was the golf professional, all well known to him. Jack had not gone to Falmouth by train.

We—the station-master and I—then went on to the telegraph-office. We were lucky enough to find the post-mistress in and willing to give information. There had been no telegram for Jack.

Now what was to be done?

I wrote a telegram to Jack's aunt, whose address I fortunately remembered, which was to be despatched the next morning, asking if Jack had arrived, giving her the club number and telling her to ring me up on the 'phone.

The station-master promised to keep his mouth shut about the matter until I had received an answer to my telegram. I had no wish to have the whole countryside talking; and we should look such idiots if we found that Jack was sitting quietly at Falmouth all the time.

Then I started on a private search of my own on my way back to the church. That, at least, could do no harm. I tramped the part of the links between the station and the church, shouting Jack's name from time to time, but without result.

The weather had cleared up nicely; it was still blowing hard, but the clouds had broken and were flying through a clear sky in great masses. Such stars as could be seen were sparkling with brilliance as if the wind and rain had washed and brushed them up. The wind was swinging round to the north of west and I thought that we should have

fine weather for a day or two. It was becoming much colder too, with a bite in the air which would have portended a sharp frost anywhere but in Cornwall.

I found myself speculating, more, I suppose, to pass the time than because I was really anxious, as to the various possible explanations of Jack's absence. Suppose he had fallen and hurt himself and had been lying out since the day before, wet through, perhaps insensible, in some beast of a hole. He might have fallen over the cliff; but there were no cliffs near the links. That was a likely solution only if he had been on his way back to the hotel. In any case, if he had gone over the cliff, the poor old chap would be finished. After last night's gale we should never find any traces of him. I put that idea out of my head rather hastily. I preferred, not being at all anxious really, to let my mind wander into romantic regions of smugglers, buried villages and legendary diabolical monsters and agencies of the sort that Sir Charles had mentioned. The idea of the last was, of course, altogether preposterous; still, as Sir Charles was so fond of saying, "there are more things in Heaven and Earth——" No, the smuggler stunt seemed the more probable. Jack might have blundered into one of their secret haunts and been nobbled. But what would they smuggle? Drink? Tobacco? Lace? Why

should they bring it to this out-of-the-way corner, right round Land's End, when they could land the stuff just as easily on the South Coast? Whisky from Ireland?—Hm! Not worth it. No, the smuggling theory was as much out of the picture as was that of the hobgoblin. There remained the cliff, or some hole into which Jack might have fallen. I tramped about the neighbourhood of the church, waiting for the service to conclude, and prodding and poking about in every place where the thick grass might conceal some trap. Then I thought that Jack might have put his ball into the churchyard and gone up into it to look for it. I searched round the corner of the wall for some place at which to climb up. The rocks were about ten feet high; and there was a stone-faced bank on the top of these. I soon found a place where the bank was broken down and where there were ledges of rock which served as steps. This was the point at which caddies went up to retrieve balls. I climbed up without difficulty. It was ill-kept, this churchyard, with innumerable and very aged tombstones in all stages of decay and smothered in long rank grass. I worked right round the churchyard wall clambering along the top of the rocks. It was a tricky job in the dark, with the rocks wet and slippery. It was quite easy to slip and fall; and in several places there was a sheer drop of ten to twelve feet. A man falling

might easily smash himself on the hard rock below. I found a second place where it appeared as though the rock below had subsided. There was a hollow here in the churchyard, but the subsidence must have occurred long ago; for the wall and bank at this place were well-built and firm. I climbed down at this point. Then I searched all along the bottom of the rocks right round the churchyard. I began to consider other conjectures. Jack might have lost his memory or gone off his head. But, of course, there were a dozen possibilities.

It is a quaint old church, part of it dating, they tell me, from the fifteenth century. The great feature of it is the wooden vaulted roof, built of oak, which, itself, is some hundreds of years old. There are also cunningly contrived little spy holes through which, I understand, the monks used to watch the congregation—looking at the girls, I expect, really. And if they were as pretty then as they are now they were well worth looking at. Old reprobates!

I crept in quietly during the hymn which followed the sermon and sat down near the door. The clergyman pronounced the benediction amidst dead silence.

Suddenly a voice rang out—a strained, anguished, half-suppressed cry. "Jack! Jack! Where are you? It's me—Margery!"

I was fearfully shocked and dumbfounded

What on earth was Margery about! Was she mad!

People round me rose to their feet and peered in the direction of the voice. The *padre* looked sternly in the same direction; then turned and walked to the vestry followed by the choir, the smaller boys of which, eyes starting out of their heads, stared back over their shoulders at poor Margery. I made my way to the girls, while the congregation, chattering in whispers about the unaccountable interruption, trooped out of the church.

I joined Maude and Margery. The latter was kneeling down with her face hidden, and I think she was crying. Maude was sitting beside her in a stony, horrified attitude. Several curious people, anxious to see the end of the episode, were standing about pretending to wait till the aisle was clear. I spoke to them as I pushed my way through, asking them to go out as the lady was ill. They went slowly and grudgingly, their silly faces turned over their shoulders, staring at Margery.

"What's the matter?" I asked Maude in a whisper.

She shook her head.

The next moment the sexton came to me and asked if we would be good enough to go and see Mr. Thring, the clergyman, in the vestry. We were "for it," evidently. Maude and I, each taking one

of Margery's arms, followed the sexton. There we found the *padre* not a divine bursting with outraged dignity as I had expected, but a quiet, gentle old man.

"I know, my dear," he said to Margery, "that you must have a very good explanation of your outburst. Perhaps I may be able to help you."

All Margery said was, "I heard Jack—Mr. Saunderson—call my name."

Then she added, "He's lost somewhere and in great danger."

I was too flabbergasted to say anything, or even to think. Was she mad?

It was Maude who chipped in. She put her arm round Margery's waist asking, "How can you know, dear?"

For answer Margery sighed and rested her head on Maude's shoulder. I thought she was going to faint. It was evidently necessary to get her back to the hotel and to bed as soon as possible; but some explanation was due to the *padre*. I took him aside and explained the circumstances as well as I could. But my story was a thin one. It amounted to this—that Jack had gone to see some people at Falmouth, but had, unaccountably, left his bag, waterproof and walking-stick behind; that Margery had heard of men being lost from time to time; that these yarns had evidently affected her nerves; and that she must have imagined that

she had heard Jack call for help. I then apologised and said, "You see, it is just a matter of nerves." I expected that the parson would have laughed it off; but to my astonishment he looked very grave.

"It's merely a matter of nerves," I repeated rather appealingly, thinking that he considered the excuse as too feeble and that he intended to make himself objectionable over the incident. But I had misjudged him. He read my mind at once and smiled slightly; then, again becoming grave, he cross-examined me at length as to Jack's disappearance, and the relations which existed between Margery and Jack. I could not understand what he was driving at, at first; but presently it dawned on me that he had entirely accepted Margery's point of view and was convinced that Jack had in some supernatural or occult fashion appealed for help through Margery. He then went across to Margery, who was sitting in a chair with Maude hanging over her, and spoke to her in such a tender and soothing way that both she and Maude began to cry. I thought it best to leave them; so went through the church and out of the main entrance to smoke and wait for them. In the entrance to the church I found a number of people collected, all wagging their heads and talking. The story of my enquiries about Jack had got round probably through the station-master or the telegraph people, and Margery's cry in the church

had roused interest to fever pitch. One or two fanatics were shocked and indignant at poor Margery's behaviour; but most of those present displayed, I am glad to say, a lively sympathy for her.

There was, however, much head-shaking and pessimism. One very old man, evidently a great authority, expressed his unalterable conviction that it was quite useless to institute a search, that it was indeed flying in the face of Providence to do so. He was a queer mixture of Christianity and Paganism. He was quite satisfied in his own mind that there existed some bloodthirsty Genius or Moloch whose home was the buried village and who, periodically, exacted a tribute of human life. This monster he confused with the Almighty in some complex fashion of his own. I heard him holding forth in this strain, and his gross superstition was having its effect on the caddie boys and, indeed, on some of the grown-up villagers who should have known better. Some of these last were wagging their silly heads in a solemn and portentous way that made me quite savage. I would have knocked some of their heads off for tuppence. I took the old reprobate to task sharply; for I feared lest I should lose assistance if a search became necessary. I drove the old scoundrel off with bitter words, asking him why he went to church if he was such a heathen as to believe in his devilish hobgoblins,

He went away muttering to himself and shaking his hoary old head. Sir Charles, who was also there, having heard of our trouble, was not very much better. He said little; but I could see from his face that he had small hope of seeing Jack again. I have no patience with these wet-blankety pessimists.

It was at this moment that I got an urgent message to go back to Maude and Margery, who were still in the church. I found them there, crying, both of them. And the old sexton was there too, and the parson. Otherwise the church was empty.

Margery said "Hush!" as I walked up the aisle; and Maude put her finger to her lips.

"I hear him again," exclaimed Margery. Then she suddenly screamed out, "Jack, Jack, it's me—Margery!" She was a pitiful sight with the tears streaming down her face.

"What is it?" I whispered to Maude.

"She says she has heard Jack calling her name."

"Did you hear it too?" I asked.

She shook her head.

We all listened intently. But I could hear nothing, the wind was making so much noise whistling round the church tower.

The parson was gazing at Margery with a very sad face.

"My dear," he said, laying his hand on her arm; but she shook him off impatiently, and turning to

me said in the most matter-of-fact, calm and collected fashion, "He's somewhere under the church."

The old sexton smiled slightly and shook his head.

"Are there any——" I began, speaking to the sexton, but stopped as I saw Margery's intent listening attitude.

I beckoned the sexton and the *padre* to follow me outside; and we all three crept out as quietly as possible. When we were outside I began to examine the sexton as to the vaults, if any, which existed under the church. There were vaults, he said, but these had been built up for over fifty years. There was no way down into them that he knew of. Yes, there was a legend that these were connected by underground passages with the buried village and with the old cottage on the site of which stood the club house. But no one had ever been down into them within the memory of man; there was no means of getting into them. Perhaps some outlet existed into one of the numerous caves amongst the rocks down on the shore. Some said these passages were the remains of old tin-workings; others that they were relics of smuggling days. Probably they were both.

So we were not much forrarder.

Maude and Margery now arrived. There was a very resolute look on the latter's face; she was no longer crying.

"John," she said to me, "I know Jack is somewhere down in those underground passages. I heard my name whispered two or three times; and I am positive it was Jack. If he is down there——"

"One minute, Margery," I said. "I'm not incredulous (which was not entirely true), but let us clear the ground as we go. Did you hear Maude's name or mine whispered too?"

"No."

"Then why your name and not one of ours?"

"Because," said Margery, "he knew you wouldn't be in church, and he would be sure to call to me—because——" (she blushed painfully, the crimson wave spreading from brow to neck) "he loves me," she concluded bravely with a half-defiant look.

"Oh!" I said lamely.

"What I want to say is," continued Margery, "if he is in there—but, of course, I know he is—but if he is in there, he went there because he thought I should be in the church at this time. If it is possible he will go on under the club house this evening, because he hopes Sir Charles will be there—don't you see?"

Yes, I did see. There was sound sense in this—if he could get there, and if he really was under the church.

But, of course, it was all the merest speculation until we could ascertain for certain whether or no Jack was at Falmouth. I then, for the first time,

thought of the telephone. Perhaps I could get through to Jack's old aunt at Falmouth. If she was on the telephone, well and good; but if not, an urgent message arriving at her house from the telephone-office, even supposing they would send it on to her, enquiring for Jack's whereabouts, and supposing he were not there, would scare the old lady out of her wits. There was no justification for panic as yet. If the old lady were not on the 'phone, I would wait for a reply to my telegram on the next day.

So off we three went to the club house accompanied by Mrs. Penryhn, who promised to give us some sort of dinner. By Jove! I would rub it into old Jack if the whole thing proved to be a false alarm; he would never hear the last of it from me—scaring poor nervous maidens out of their wits with his beastly telepathetic messages!

I went straight to the telephone book and looked up his aunt; but there was no one with her name in it. She could not be on the 'phone. That settled that, then. We must just wait for an answer to my telegram. And in the meantime it seemed hardly necessary to organise search parties for the following day; in fact, we should look such fools if Jack was at Falmouth all the time.

Of course he was at Falmouth!

No; I decided I would take no action until I received a reply to my telegram.

But in this I counted without two things: the inner consciousness, or intuition or nerves (call it whichever you like), of Margery, backed up by Maude; and the enthusiasm and curiosity of the local inhabitants.

When I propounded my determination to the two girls, a look of dawning horror appeared in Margery's face which was reflected in that of Maude. I recognised quickly that they would never forgive me if I let things slide and if anything really had happened to Jack; and it did not require Margery's "What! let him die without an attempt to save him!" to make me change my mind. I may have been weak; but it is better to be weak than to risk being regarded for the rest of your life with scorn and contempt as little better than a murderer by the wife of your bosom *and* her sister. I was just thinking of how to wriggle out of it, when Fortune intervened to save me. The caddie-master wished to see me, and following Mrs. Penryhn who announced him, he stood on the threshold of the door twiddling his hat.

"I got some of them boys, sir, as you ordered, to search for Mr. Saunderson."

Now, I hadn't ordered them; but the caddie-master and the caddies were determined on the fun of a search and were by no means averse to being paid for their amusement. That was the truth of it. And when I saw the beaming glances of

gratitude literally showered on me by the two girls—well, I thought that, in this case, truth was far better left in its proper place—at the bottom of a well.

"Quite right, Brown," I said, "quite right; I'll be with you in a few minutes."

I looked—regretfully, I have no doubt—at an excellent pie which Mrs. Penryhn was just bringing into the room and which I had sampled at lunch a day or two before, and went off with Brown. You understand, of course, that I was firmly convinced that Jack was quite safe at Falmouth. There was really no particle of evidence to show that he was actually lost; and I ask any man if he would not have thought as I did. But there it was. I must go without dinner, or have a mere scrap of one; and I must tramp the golf links all night. Nothing else would, I knew, content the two girls. But, by Jabers! if Jack was all the time at Falmouth, how I would just drop it into him. The worst of it was that he would do nothing but laugh, and laugh, and laugh.

Well, I went out and started off about a dozen caddies to search the golf links, promising a reward for any clue, and feeling a consummate fool the whole time.

Then, suddenly, something occurred which put rather a different complexion on the whole matter. As I was coming back to get some grub, I saw Jack's bag of sticks in the entrance hall of the club house. Now Jack always put his clubs into the caddie-

master's office, to have them cleaned, when he had finished for the day. He never left them in the entrance hall except while at lunch, and then only if he intended to play again in the afternoon. Yet the clubs had been cleaned, which told me that his caddie had cleaned them after his round on the Saturday morning ; and that Jack had fetched them after lunch.

I knew his clubs well—had very often handled them. One of his mashies was missing. Neither were there any balls in the pocket of his bag.

The inference was that he had gone out with a mashie and half a dozen balls after lunch for a little practice ; and wherever he had gone, he had taken this mashie and these balls with him.

Well, I went in, had some dinner and thought over the problem.

1. He had waited on at the club for the expected telegram.

2. He had gone out to practise to while away the time.

3. He had not returned to the club.

4. No telegram had arrived.

5. He had not received a telephone message at the club ; for if he had, he would not have gone off with mashie and balls and leaving his kit behind.

Query. Had he gone to the telephone in the village, received a message and gone straight off ?

6. He had not gone away by train.

Query. Had he hired a car?

7. He would not go to Falmouth on a bike or on his flat feet—I knew that well enough; he hated a push bike and he hated walking, except when shooting or after a golf ball.

So the two points to clear up were: Had he been to the telephone in the village, and had he hired a car in the village?

If neither of these, then something had happened to him without any doubt.

Directly I had swallowed some food I rang up the post-office. They assured me that they knew Mr. Jack Saunderson perfectly well by sight, and that he had not been to the telephone the preceding afternoon. I then rang up the village pub., which possessed an old ramshackle car, the only taxi in the neighbourhood. No, Jack had not hired it.

So the matter was serious after all.

I went back to the two girls, and we discussed various hypotheses—at least Maude and I did. Margery took no part in the conversation. She was quite satisfied that he was somewhere underground, that she had heard him in the church, and that she would, in view of Sir Charles' experiences, hear him again that evening in the club house, supposing he was able to get there. Her attitude, which brushed aside every other possibility, rather annoyed me. For instance, it was possible that he had been

knocked insensible by a passing motor car, picked up and taken to some house in the neighbourhood; though, as Maude pointed out, the owners of the car would certainly have communicated with the police by this time.

Then he might have smashed his leg, and might be lying out somewhere on the links—or he might have fallen over the cliff. The thing to do was to search every square yard of the links as soon as possible, and I was just starting off with that purpose when Sir Charles and Baker turned up.

The latter, who had heard about it from the former, was most sympathetic, and enquired into all particulars with the utmost interest. He said he thought that he might be able to throw some light on it. One of the cars, belonging to the mine, which had run into Falmouth on the Saturday afternoon, had given a lift to a gentleman. He had been unable to discover further details, because the driver who had been alone in the car, had merely mentioned the fact on his return, and had then gone away on leave till Tuesday.

Here, I thought, was the end of our trouble. But to my profound astonishment, Margery refused to accept my point of view. So to humour her I asked Baker if he knew anything of the underground passages which were said to exist. He became quite communicative, but he had little to

tell us. The mine workings on which they were engaged lay inland from the mine head; and, so far as they knew, no part of the system extended under either the church or the club house. There were certainly, he added, some very ancient workings, probably those of the Phœnicians, excavated two thousand years ago, which had not been explored. It would take years, he said, to explore them thoroughly, and require a vast amount of labour and capital. For most, if not all of them, had fallen in or been flooded. These ancient seams had, moreover, been worked out, and there was, consequently, no inducement to reopen them. There were, of course, no plans of them; and a man once lost in them--well, it would be pure luck if he ever got out.

Not very hopeful, was it?

But one thing cheered me. He could not conceive how it was possible for anyone to get into them except down through the mine head. There was certainly no other entrance to these workings that he knew of. In fact, he placed but little faith in the theory that Jack was in there. That I could see, though he did not say so.

We had all been sitting in the dining-room, Margery with her elbows on the table and her chin resting in the palms of her hands, her eyes fixed on Baker; Maude close beside her, twisting her handkerchief into knots.

"But then," said Margery, "how could I have heard him call to me?"

There was, of course, no answer to this question; for with the exception of Maude none of us believed that she had heard anything. We three men looked furtively and rather shamefacedly at one another, but said nothing.

"I know he is down in there," said Margery.

"Well, of course, it is always possible," Baker replied.

But Sir Charles shook his head. Margery spotted it at once. "What do you mean?" she asked him.

"Merely a theory of mine, my dear," replied Sir Charles, spreading out his hands in rather a deprecating fashion.

"What is it?" Margery asked, a sudden sparkle as of hope in her eyes.

I was looking casually at Baker. He in his turn was watching Margery, the old expression of admiration in his face. But as he noticed the bright eager look on Margery's face his own clouded, and he showed his clenched teeth in what was certainly not a smile. It struck me that he disliked Margery's anxiety on Jack's account. Was the fellow in love with her, I wondered? It was quite possible, though somewhat sudden. But, after all, he had known her before.

"My dear young lady," Sir Charles replied,

"it is merely a pyschological theory in connection with the seventh sense."

"The seventh sense?" Margery exclaimed. "Do you mean a woman's intuition?"

"No, no," Sir Charles replied; "I would prefer not to explain my theory at this juncture."

I thanked Heaven for that, for I knew what he meant. He was convinced that Jack was dead, and that his spirit was endeavouring to communicate with Margery. Well, he might be right; but Heaven forfend that he should propound his theory now.

So I rose, saying, "Well, the thing to do is to search the links," and I went on to urge Maude and Margery to go back to the hotel. But Margery would not hear of it. She intended to wait about between the church and the club house all night if necessary, in case Jack should call to her again. Maude backed her up.

I made no attempt to dissuade them, knowing how useless it would be, the more especially as they had already made their arrangements with Mrs. Penryhn. I contented myself with asking Baker if he would help in the search. That he was quite willing to do up till midnight; but after that hour he must get back to the mine, as he had much work to do very early the next morning. He suggested, however, that he would be of greater value if he returned to the mine at once to explore

a piece of the old workings, and make quite certain that there was no connection between them and any underground passages which might exist under the church. I agreed with him, and thanked him heartily for his assistance, the more so as I knew that he discredited the theory that Jack was anywhere in the mine workings.

I walked out with Baker and Sir Charles, and we discussed the problem. Baker and I arrived at the conclusion that if Jack had not been the passenger in the motor car, he had probably just caught the train and jumped into it without taking a ticket. That, of course, would be the solution. How foolish it was of us not to have thought of it before! I hurried back to the club to put this idea to the two girls, but when I arrived I found them both outside, together with the caddie-master and three caddies. All were in a state of great excitement. One of the boys, the youngest, a lad of about twelve years old, had said that he had heard some one shouting for help, but could not say where it came from. He thought it came from the direction of the churchyard. When he heard it he had been standing on the sandhill in front of the seventh tee. The shouts sounded a great way off. I asked him if he had replied. No, he had not. There was an indignant chorus from the other boys of "Why not?" But the small boy only squirmed. He had evidently

been afraid. That was hardly to be wondered at, for the legendary monster who inhabited the buried village was a very real personage to most of the children. The caddie-master threw doubt on the boy's story, maintaining that the young scamp was after the reward. But this the boy denied stoutly. I hurried off with them to the place where he had heard the shouts. We waited there for about half an hour, but heard nothing. I shouted and bellowed, but there was no reply. Then the caddie-master said that he must be going home, but would be out again the first thing in the morning. I told the three boys to go home too. The two elder boys ran off at once; but the youngest asked me if he might go home, get leave from his mother and come back to the search. I was confident that he had told the truth, and had no desire to check his enthusiasm.

So I praised up the little man, told him he was in a fair way to earn the reward, that the monster in the buried village was "all my eye," and was only used to frighten children. I told him to come back to the same place to listen again, and he was to reply if he heard another shout, and find out exactly where the shout came from. I said that there was a man's life at stake, and that if he could help to save it he would be proud for the rest of his life. He was a thoroughly well-plucked youngster; and he set his little jaw, and his bright

eyes sparkled as he marched off like the true-bred Briton that he was. I was satisfied that if the "monster" shouted at him again he would locate him. And, as you will see, my confidence was not misplaced. I then went back to the club.

Hardly had I arrived when Maude came to the door of the club house and beckoned to me.

"Margery has heard him again," she said.

"What did he say this time?" I asked.

"She couldn't distinguish; but she thought she heard a sort of whisper say 'Sir Charles.'"

"Well, that pans out with her theory," said I. "Do you think it was imagination?"

"No, of course it wasn't," Maude replied rather impatiently, I thought.

I asked Maude if she had heard him. No, she had not. Then why not? I asked—her ears were as sharp as Margery's.

But I got no answer, unless the pitying look which Maude threw at me as she went back to Margery was intended to be one.

I had already asked the caddie-master if there were any cellars under the club house; and now I put the same question to Mrs. Penryhn.

No, there were no cellars, but there was a sort of a hole where she kept the driftwood that she collected on the shore for her fires. She took me to it, and I soon cleared out the small quantity of wood in it. While I was so engaged I heard Margery

shrill out at the pitch of her voice, "It's me—Margery! It's me—Margery! Oh, Jack, where are you!"

I felt very sorry for her, though at the same time much annoyed—a form of hysteria, I supposed—and all about a mare's nest, too. Jack was, of course, at Falmouth the whole time. It was too silly; and we should look such idiots.

This wood hole was only about two or three feet across and about a couple of feet deep. It ran horizontally into the rocky foundations of the old cottage on which the kitchen of the club house had been built. I lay down and stuck my head into it as far as it would go and listened. But not a sound could I hear, of course.

After a few minutes I went into the club and explained the new theory of Jack having travelled without a ticket. But I might as well have argued with brick walls. Nothing would shake Margery's conviction that Jack was in trouble and somewhere underground, lost in subterranean passages. And Maude, though she had not heard anything, was equally convinced. I fussed and fumed, but wild horses would not have dragged them away from the club and the church.

"I've told Jack that I'm here, and I must stay here," said Margery stubbornly.

Maude refused, of course, to leave Margery.

So I arranged with Mrs. Penryhn to give us breakfast at half-past seven. Though I was satisfied

that I had hit on the correct solution, yet in spite of myself I felt doubtful. It was just possible that Margery was right; so having seen the two girls fixed up, I went off to tramp about the links. That was about all I could do.

I determined that the next day I would myself search the caves in the hope of finding some entrance to these subterranean passages. But in the meantime there was nothing to be done but just wander about in the hope of hearing Jack shout.

The gale had fizzled out just as quickly as it had arisen—in the way it has in these parts. There was now nothing but a smart breeze from the north-west; the sky was clear of clouds, and the stars were sparkling like diamonds—a gem of a night. But it was cold, and the grass was dripping wet. My boots and stockings were very soon wet through. It was getting on for midnight, and I hoped that Maude and Margery were putting in a good sleep. I decided to walk to the hotel by the cliff path to see if there were any signs of Jack in that direction; but I thought I would go back to the club in the first instance in case there were any fresh developments. I crossed the low ridge of sandhills which separates the seventh tee from the sixth green, walked round the bunkers guarding the latter, over the first tee, and tried to look in at the smoking-room windows. But the blinds were down and the curtains drawn. So

round I went into the house, and opened the smoking-room door very quietly. There was a lamp burning, but turned low. Maude was asleep on the sofa; Margery was in an arm-chair facing the door, with her head thrown back on a cushion. Such light as there was, was shining full on her face. She also appeared to be asleep, but as I looked I saw a tear sparkle for an instant in her eyelashes and fall. I crept out with a feeling that I had been guilty of sacrilege. I closed the door very softly, and was turning to leave the club when Mrs. Penryhn appeared in a dressing-gown, with her hair screwed up in what looked like little bits of paper. She beckoned me into the dining-room, and there on the fire was a saucepan simmering. It seems she had heard my steps on the gravel, and had hurried down to "hot up" the coffee. She insisted on my having another brew of it; and cold and wet as I was, it was jolly good.

Mrs. Penryhn is a real good sort. There was nothing she wouldn't do for us. The way she had fussed over Maude and Margery was a sight to see. Mind you, she ran the whole of this club house, the catering and cooking, almost single-handed. She was hard at work the whole week through; and Sunday was her off day, her one day of rest. Yet here she was apparently delighted at the opportunity to cook and care for us.

Well, I went to the hotel, walking round by the

rocks and the cliffs. There were no signs of Jack. By the time I arrived I was extremely angry, especially with myself, for having been so weak as to give into what I was firmly convinced was simple hysteria. But the point was that they were not hysterical women—very much the reverse indeed.

Anyhow there was really nothing to be done but to await a reply to my telegram.

CHAPTER X

DESPAIR

JACK SAUNDERSON'S ADVENTURE

A SHARP pain in my leg when I turned over awoke me. For quite a long time I could not, for the life of me, recall my whereabouts. What was I doing lying on sand? I thought I must be in the middle of a nightmare and made a strenuous effort to bring myself back to reality. I picked up sand with my right hand, and wondered what had become of the bedclothes. And what was the matter with my left arm and leg?

Quite suddenly the memory of where I was and all that had happened to me flashed into my mind. I felt for my torch. What on earth had I done with it? The horrible thought arose that I had lost it, and was doomed to struggle for my life in pitch darkness. Then I remembered my matches. They were in my left-hand coat pocket. With some difficulty, for my hands were shaking and my teeth chattering, I got out the box; and with

greater difficulty, for my left hand was almost helpless, I managed to strike a match. I could not see the torch anywhere and the match went out. In trying to light another I dropped the box. I found the box again, but the matches had all fallen out. Very carefully I struck the one match left me. By its light I found half a dozen more; and, better luck still, in reaching for one my elbow touched something hard, which proved to be the torch, buried in the sand. I must have let it drop as I went to sleep. I remembered switching off the light. I now turned it on, and collected every match I could find with the utmost care. Then I looked at my watch; it was half-past three.

I thought I would have a smoke, and debated whether it should be a cigarette or a pipe, and whether I could afford a match. I also considered whether the smell would give me away to my pursuers. But they would have been up with me before this had they been following me. They must have chucked it or failed to get through. The driving sand would very quickly have covered my tracks, and they might well be searching for me in the neighbourhood of my cubby-hole.

I decided on a cigarette, feeling disinclined for a pipe, having had no food for so long. The smoke did me good, though it made me thirsty, and the tobacco tasted like straw. I rather wondered at that, for I had drunk enough in all conscience not

long before. But I knew that I had a touch of fever. I must try to find more water. After all I had found it once or twice; and, the subsoil being rock, I should probably come across plenty more of it.

Remembering my former plans, I decided to go westward and try to get under the church in time for the evening service. It was my only chance. Bates had not joined me; and he was doubtless still fighting his way out through the mine head, if he had not been killed.

Before starting I turned the light up to the hole in the roof. It was quite filled in with sand, though I thought I could distinguish the end of my mashie shaft in amongst the matted grass.

So I was definitely shut in, and the sand was without doubt burying me in deeper every minute.

When I tried to move I found I could hardly do so, I was so stiff and sore.

I must have fallen asleep again, leaving the torch switched on, for it was a quarter to five when I looked again at my watch. But I could not for the life of me remember whether it was Sunday morning or Sunday evening. I had to work back, and recollected finally that I had been with Bates at five o'clock on Sunday morning. So this must be Sunday evening.

I feared that I had lost valuable time, and that I might not get under the church before the evening service started. Still my rest had done me good,

and I felt twice the man that I had been. So I started off up the western passage. The draught, I noticed, was very much less than before, due, no doubt, to the silting up of the easterly tunnels. Neither was the sand very much deeper on the floor of my cavern. So there was not much danger of being buried in sand here, at all events. That was a blessing, and I shivered as I thought of my struggle with the sand. The church, if I remembered right, was about two hundred yards from the churchyard bunker, and the corner of the churchyard about fifty yards from it. So as I went along I calculated that I would arrive in ample time—provided it were all plain sailing. I had covered about fifty yards when I came to a side tunnel bearing off to my left, that is, to the south-west. Now, which of these should I take? The club house was to the north of the church, that is, to my right. So the right tunnel probably led to the club house and the left to the church. I accordingly took the one to the left. I now seemed to be moving slightly uphill, and presently my torch showed in front of me a wall of rock that seemed to block the passage altogether. But when I reached it I found that there was a way round, narrow, but practicable. As I turned the corner, to my great delight I saw daylight. Here was a happy end to my adventure! But even as the thought struck me I trod on something hard,

which rolled under my foot ; and turning the torch on it, found it was a skull. One of my predecessors ! There was the rest of him, too, half-buried in sand. I did not wait to investigate, but scrambled round him to the point where the daylight entered. My heart sank. It was a crevice in the rocks not more that three inches broad, though running right up to the top of the tunnel. Worse still, the rocks were five to six feet thick. There was no egress at this point. I was weak and ill ; the deadly loneliness, silence and black darkness had shaken my nerve. The disappointment was too much for me. I sat down, and I am not certain I did not cry. At least that is what I supposed it was. I had not cried for so many years, not since I was a small boy, that I had quite forgotten the feel of it. But my Adam's apple was apparently trying to get into my mouth.

After a few minutes I laboured on to my feet to obtain the best view through my crevice. It was, in any case, a blessed relief to see daylight again. I could see right across the links. That, I thought, must be the seventh tee ; and away beyond it was the sandhill and bunker guarding the thirteenth green. And beyond that again I could get just a glimpse of the sea, with the cliffs on the far side of the bay, lit up by the last rays of the setting sun. How I longed to be out there !

As I was gazing my fill, figures appeared, first

one, then another. But they were walking away from me, and were too far off to hear me if I shouted. They were moving along to the thirteenth green. One of them, surely, was old John. Was he searching for me, I wondered?

I shouted and shouted, but the figures moved on relentlessly. It was useless waste of effort, and my throat was sore.

Now, what should I do? Should I carry out my plans or wait where I was on the chance of the searchers coming back within earshot of me?

One point that decided me was my thirst. Unless I could find water I should not be able to shout much more. Another point was the necessity of letting the world above me know that I was buried down here. They might hear me in the church. It was, at least, worth trying, while it was useless to stop at this crevice during the night. So long as I was back here by Monday morning that was all that was necessary. Besides, the lives of Bates and his comrades probably depended on my exertions. So I put my best foot foremost and moved off again. As I went along I calculated that the point where the crevice was lay under the churchyard wall. I remembered then that at one point the wall was broken down as if the rocky foundation had subsided. That was evidently exactly what had happened; a chunk of rock must have fallen in, half blocking the subterranean passage and

opening up the crack in the rocks. There was no doubt of one thing, that the passage I was in led under the church. I looked at my watch again. Time was getting on; it was close on six, and the service would start at half-past. If I was to make myself heard it must be before the church filled or after it emptied, while there were only one or two people in it. I hurried for all I was worth; but it was rather horrible, and took some resolution, to leave the gleam of daylight and plunge again into the black darkness.

In about a quarter of an hour I came to the end of the tunnel, which terminated in two or three worn stone steps. Evidently there had once been an exit at this point, but it was now blocked up. Up above my head was a great flagstone. I could not reach it, and so could not say whether it had been cemented in or not. But it probably had been, for when I switched off my torch, no glimmer of light appeared; or it might be that the steps had merely given access to vaults under the church.

The steps were damp, as were the rock walls of the tunnel, though there was no trickle of water. However, I managed to relieve my thirst slightly by licking the dampest parts of the rock. There was but little sand on the floor of the passage at this point, just a mere sprinkling. Neither was there any draught.

I started shouting at twenty minutes past six.

I halloaed out Margery's name, hoping that she might have come early; but my voice sounded muffled even in my own ears, though it seemed to reverberate away down the tunnel. I stopped presently, hearing a sort of booming sound which I took to be the organ. I was doubtless right, as the sound was intermittent.

I then asked myself whether I should wait here till the service was over. I decided that I would, for it had taken me half an hour to get to the church from the churchyard bunker. I might certainly get to the crevice and back before the service ended, but I was averse to losing a chance of making myself heard during the service itself when silence reigned in the church. I was rather startled by the scurrying of two big rats, which bolted close past me and disappeared in a small crack in the wall. There was also an enormous slug on the wall—loathsome brute!

In between the booming of the organ I shouted, alternating Margery's name and "Help!" It was the longest service I ever attended. It seemed to last for years. It was then I decided to write an account of my adventure, as I still insisted on calling it to myself, in my pocket-book, so that if it terminated fatally and I was discovered at some future date, people would know who I was and how I had come by my end. I should like Margery to know that I was fond of her, and I decided that

a letter to her would be my very last effort. But I was far from giving way to pessimism. Of course I should be rescued; it was too absurd to suppose that a man could be allowed to die of starvation or thirst right in the midst of numbers of people. The thought of the skeletons I had found hit me, but I put it away and turned to my pencil and pocket-book.

How should I begin my story? The only idea which came to me was to copy Robinson Crusoe, "I was born of poor but respectable parents."

That was quite unsuitable; but the sentence kept recurring to my mind.

I could not concentrate my attention on the writing; for, as you may imagine, I kept a sharp eye on my watch and also listened intently to the booming of the organ and the singing. I thought I could distinguish a shrill note now and then, but could not be quite certain that it was not my own breathing that I heard. My throat was very sore, and a sort of squeak occurred in my nose when I breathed. This I mistook once or twice for voices up above.

It struck me suddenly that my torch was giving a very poor light. Of course it was running down with this continuous use. I hastily put away pocket-book and pencil and switched off the light. I must write my story when I got back to the crevice.

The black darkness was terrible; it seemed to weigh me down; it smothered me. I felt half suffocated, as though I could not breathe. For a moment I imagined that I was back out at the "Front," in my "bug-run," on a very cold night, and that I had put my head right inside to get a good "fug," and so promote warmth. So strong was this feeling that I put up my hand to push back the blankets, and I was quite astonished to find nothing there. I craved to switch on my torch, but strenuously resisted the impulse.

I began to see things—shapes of varying colours, now golden, turning to red, to green, to blue. They were like clouds, in the first instance, rolling up over a horizon, great masses of them, dwindling to a bright speck of gleaming light, which died away, giving place to a fresh mass of clouds. Presently these took the shape of a woman, dim and indistinct of outline. I strained my eyes to distinguish the features. Was it Margery by any chance? A cruel, beastly, indescribable face slowly materialised. I rubbed my eyes and looked again. All was black. It was imagination. Then the clouds appeared again. I watched them carefully. They rolled up, changed colour just as before, diminished to a point, finally took the form of a woman. Her features appeared slowly. In another instant I should know if it were Margery. But as I watched, the features changed to the

same beastly face I had seen before. It really was indescribable. I can say only that it was all mouth and eyes with some nebulous form behind it. With an effort I studied it calmly, though a sense of extreme nausea came over me. I forced myself to look at it. It expanded and contracted like a jelly-fish, approaching me slowly. There was a phosphorescent glow about it.

I could stand it no longer. I switched on my light. But the glare of it blinded me. So intense was the contrast with the impenetrable darkness that involuntarily I shut my eyes for an instant. And in that fortieth part of a second the beast, if it really were a living creature, had disappeared. Or was it fancy, hallucination, or did I really see something fade away into the wall? A rock jutted out at that very point. I made my way to it and found a large hole behind it, which proved to be the entrance to another chamber, twenty feet or more wide and as many high. It was empty, but there was another passage leading out of it going, as far as I could judge, to the northward, that is, towards the club house.

I could hear the sound of the organ and the singing much more clearly in this cavern, and I determined to stay here. But I found myself looking round behind me apprehensively. That fiend, or beast, or whatever it was, had certainly got on my nerves. More to reassure myself than

for any other reason I shouted Margery's name during a lull in the noise above. On the instant I heard, or thought I heard, a shrill but very distant voice call my name and "Where are you?"

I shouted a second and a third time, but there was no answer. I took my courage in both hands and switched off my light. But the darkness came down on me again like a pall. The organ began again louder than before. The noise swelled; there was no doubt of it, the congregation was leaving the church.

Now was my time. When the booming died away I shouted, "Margery! Margery!" and "Help! Margery! Margery!"

I held my breath and listened. Then shouted again, but my voice was very weak.

I could have sworn I heard a very distant voice say, "Jack." God! how I listened. Yes, surely, I heard "Jack," and "Where are you?" I roared incoherent instructions, "Churchyard bunker—hole in the churchyard bunker—search it."

No answer. Then again, "Jack, where are you?"

Somehow the idea that Margery was looking for me and calling me "Jack" infused new life into me. I roared and shouted, struggling upright to get my head nearer the roof, then listened, but

could hear only the wheezing in my throat. I held my breath till I thought I should have burst, and listened again. I heard nothing.

As I dropped again to my knees the light of my torch swung round on to the new tunnel entrance. Something moved in it. I rushed towards it, filled with a sort of blind fury, and flashed my light down it, but could see nothing. Neither were there any tracks or footsteps on the floor; but there was little sand here; the floor was all hard black rock. I noticed, however, a sort of trail that glistened in the light of my torch. I touched it with my finger. It was sticky, slimy, and stinking —a kind of moss or weed, I supposed. It was all over the place. I moved round the cavern, and in one corner found a trickle of water. It dripped from a crack half way up the wall and disappeared in another crack in the floor. I managed to block up this latter crack with my handkerchief, and in a few minutes collected about half a tumblerful of water in a little hollow in the rock. It was, I think, the saving of me; for my throat and tongue were so parched what with my shouting and the fever on me, that I do not think I could have lasted out much longer without that drink.

But my light was getting dimmer; and after satisfying my thirst and taking my bearings very carefully, so that I could return to the water in the dark if necessary, I started off homewards—home-

wards!—that was the name I was giving to the crevice which let in the blessed daylight!

It was a glimpse of that daylight I craved, and a breath of fresh air. The difficulty of breathing in the darkness was increasing.

I was thirsty again, too.

I returned to my trickle of water.

I remember debating which of the two I could the better dispense with—water or daylight.

The appearance of the golden clouds and the horrible face decided me.

I switched on my torch, and it gave but the faintest light. It was nearly finished, like its owner.

. . . . . .

I remember that my torch gave out. I remember that I got back to my crevice. I remember that my thirst drove me to seek water again; but that I dared not face the fiend, or whatever it was, in the vault under the church. I remember that I tried to return to the cavern where I had first obtained water, but that my road was blocked by sand.

I have a gruesome memory of blundering panic-stricken along some passage and of a struggle with something—some presence, some devil—and of a ghastly nausea which nearly overcame me.

And all the time the question, "Jack, where are you?" hammered in my brain.

Where was I? God alone knew.

. . . . . .

I was back at my crevice. The moonlight was, I think, streaming in through it.

I saw Margery. She was not laughing and chattering. There was a look of infinite pity on her face.

She stood there and asked me, "Jack, where are you?"

I had no answer for her.

She seemed to fade away.

Oh, the anguish of it!

Again she asked me, "Jack, where are you?"

Then at last I knew.

A familiar, delicious scent had stolen across my senses, and I answered her:

"Where you found the violets, dear."

CHAPTER XI

JOHN SAUNDERSON'S NARRATIVE

I ARRIVED back at the hotel at about two o'clock on Monday morning and managed to get in. Everybody was in bed, but I found a French window on the ground floor unbolted in the confidential way they have in these parts. So I just stepped in, went up to my room, changed into dry clothes and stretched myself out on my bed for a few minutes.

I suppose I had been there for about five minutes when I heard a bell ring. It continued ringing and was accompanied by a loud knocking on the front door.

I thought some one had probably seen me enter through a window, and was rousing the hotel to warn them that a thief was on the premises; and as I was the thief I considered it only fair that I should go down and explain it.

So down I went, to find two of the maids in dressing-gowns and in a great state of excitement, listening at the front door, which they had declined to open. Some man was asking for me.

For me?

All sorts of speculations chased through my brain as I unbolted and unchained and unlocked the door. It was Jack who was off his head; it was some one who had recognised me as I came in; it was the police who wanted me! It was none of these. It was Bates.

"I'm Bates, sir," he said.

"Bates?" I replied. "And who the devil is Bates?"

"Bates, sir; 'im as was in your company."

He considered that this was sufficient explanation, and knowing him as I did, I ought to have regarded it as such. But for the moment I thought he was begging—as many another poor devil of an ex-soldier had been driven to do. But this was hardly a seasonable time at which to come a-begging. I looked hard at him, and it was quite a minute before I recognised him. Instead of the burly but smart ruffian I remembered, I saw a grubby, unshaven giant with a three weeks' growth of beard and long hair. It gave me quite a shock when at last I recognised this thing as Bates. I knew him finally by his eyes. There was the same bright sparkle in them. However much the skin of him may have deteriorated, there was the same Bates inside it.

"What do you want?" I asked rather curtly, I am afraid.

"Mister Saunderson sent me to you, sir—'im as 'ad number two company," he added.

I had lit the gas in the hall, and I now called Bates in and told the two maids who were twittering in the background that they could go off to bed again, and that I would see about shutting up the door. I expected Bates to tell me that Jack was safe and sound somewhere; and that all I should have to do would be to find out where he was, thank Bates, arrange to see him again at some more respectable hour next day, say good-night to him, and turn in for some well-deserved sleep.

But his first words disabused me.

"He's down in the mine, sir, up agin them Bolshies."

What in the name of glory did he mean?

"What mine? what Bolshies?" I asked him.

But this double-barrelled question upset him, and he was silent, cogitating, doubtless, as to which he would answer first.

"I don't 'old with this 'ere cold-blooded murder," he began.

"Good God, man! what are you talking about—who's been murdered? Has Captain Saunderson been murdered? What is it, man? Tell me!"

But this effort of mine flummoxed him more than ever.

It was only then that I really remembered Bates He was essentially a man of action, and any infor-

mation you wished to obtain from him had to be wrung out of him like water out of a half-dried towel.

"Tell me, Bates," I said, "where is Captain Saunderson?"

"I don't rightly know, sir," he replied.

At this moment I noticed that Bates was swaying backwards and forwards.

Was the man drunk?

Then I saw a little pool of blood forming on the floor at his feet.

I took him by the arm, led him to a chair, and asked him where he had been hit. But he would not tell me until he had disburdened his soul of the news he had come to give. So like Bates!

There was a doctor staying in the hotel, and I got one of the maids, who had by no means gone back to bed, to go and knock him up. In the meantime by dint of questions I got out of Bates that Jack was somewhere down in the mine workings, which were being utilised as a secret dump for arms by Revolutionaries and Communists; that he was in a bad way, and would be killed if not rescued fairly soon; and that there were miners, friends of Bates, who were fighting a pitched battle with these revolutionaries. The poor chap tried to tell me something else, about a cavern and a bunker; but he was almost at his last gasp, and I could not understand what he said.

The doctor arrived; Bates collapsed, and I hurried off to the police-station, not knowing what else to do. I decided not to tell Maude and Margery until I had learnt more about this business. So I passed the club house without going in. The village policeman refused altogether to credit my somewhat sketchy story until he suddenly remembered that at about midnight, just when he had been about to turn in, two motor chars-à-bancs had passed up the village street. There was nothing very uncommon in this, as much of the motor traffic from the mine took place at night; but in this particular instance he had noticed that the rear car had been full of men, and he was inclined to think that the other one had had more men than usual in it. He therefore said he would come with me to institute inquiries at the mine head. He gave his wife secret instructions as to what she was to do in various eventualities, and off we went. It was a two-mile tramp, and it was close on four o'clock by the time we arrived at the mine. We went to the manager's, that is, to Baker's house, and rang and knocked, without result. We tried the broken-down buildings at the head of the mine, but they were empty. There were ample signs, however, of a sudden and hasty flitting, and things looked very suspicious. The place was filthy, littered with empty tins, bottles, bones, and even chunks of rotting meat and mouldy bread. We

walked towards the building over the mine shaft, and as we approached the entrance a gruff voice, which startled both of us, asked us who we were. We looked up, to see the surly countenance of a thick-set man armed with a pistol emerging from the shaft. The "bobbie," his dignity ruffled by the question as well as by the facts that he had been startled and had shown it, drew notebook and pencil from his pocket, and advanced on his interlocutor with all the outraged majesty of the law.

"It's up to me," he said, "to ask you that question."

But here I intervened, judging that there would be trouble from the truculent expression on the miner's face—for that he was one of the miners Bates had mentioned I could see at a glance.

"Bates," I said, "roused me up to tell me that there was a row on here—I was his officer in the war," I added.

Bates' name acted as a charm. A grin slowly overspread the man's face. "Bates is the boy," he said, and smacked his thigh. He turned his head and shouted down the shaft, "It's all right, mates; come along up."

Then there was a sight to see. Out of the shaft trooped about ten miners, armed with pistols, carrying amongst them two wounded and two dead men.

But Jack was not amongst them.

Consumed with anxiety, I asked about him. No, none of them had seen him for a long time, though Bates had told them all about him and had gone to find him. That was the last they had seen of Bates. I asked if Bates had been wounded when he left them. Nothing to speak of, was the reply. So Bates must have been shot while looking for Jack. That looked bad for old Jack. I thereupon appealed to the miners to help me to search for him, and found half a dozen volunteers without difficulty. The revolutionaries had vanished. The policeman went off to make a report and obtain assistance, while I with my party went down the shaft to search for Jack. While we were on our way down I heard the story of the fight. The miners with Bates at their head had battened down the trap-door leading to the lower level, had armed themselves, and had then pushed up the main tunnel. But on reaching the main shaft they had been attacked by Baker and his revolutionaries and slowly driven back. The miners were not good hands with the automatic pistol. Bates in the meantime had discovered that Jack was missing, and had turned down one of the side passages to find him, and that was the last they had seen of him. They had ultimately been forced right back to the chamber, where they had barricaded themselves behind cases of pistols, and so kept the revolutionaries at bay all the afternoon and evening

of Sunday. It must have been about this time that Baker, with a search party, had gone round to the lower level to find Jack. It was evidently important for him to ascertain for certain whether or no Jack had escaped and given the alarm.

About one o'clock on Monday morning the miners began to think that the Bolshies had gone. Very cautiously one or two of them scouted up the tunnel. But it was a ticklish job, as each side passage might conceal an ambush, and it was a couple of hours before they reached the mine head.

With my search party I had just reached the lower level when about five o'clock a message was brought to me by the "boots" from the hotel. Maude had telephoned some two hours before, just after I had left the hotel in fact, urging me to come to her at once, as she was in great trouble because Margery had disappeared. So leaving the miners to continue the search, I hurried off there and then, running most of the way, in a state of considerable anxiety. For from what I had seen down in the mine, and from what I had heard from the miners, I knew that there was a gang of first-class ruffians who would stick at nothing knocking about in the neighbourhood. I arrived at the club about half-past five, to find Maude in an awful state and Mrs. Penryhn administering sal volatile. Margery was not there; she had clean disappeared. I could not make head or tail of their story, for both

of them would try to speak at the same time. It was a regular hotch-potch about messages and motor cars, and Margery and Jack and Baker, and what not. Fortunately, young Rutherford—to whom you have not yet been introduced—was there; and he was able to explain. He is a particularly nice young fellow, who is staying at the hotel, and is on his holidays—I beg his pardon—on leave from Sandhurst. He had heard the noise in the hotel when I was interviewing Bates, and had come down just after I had left. He had heard the story from the doctor, had insisted on putting Bates into his bed, and was just about to come after me to offer his services when Maude rang up on the telephone. He took the message, routed out the "boots," and sent him to fetch me; then went off to the club to help Maude. He found her in a great state of mind because Margery had vanished. He was about to go and search for the latter, for whom, as is quite apparent to everybody, he has a grand, if hopeless, passion, when a motor car drove up. The next instant a note was brought in. It was from Baker and was addressed to Margery. Maude opened it—well, here it is; I found it on the smoking-room table:

DEAR MISS CARTWRIGHT,

I have found him. He is badly hurt, and wishes to see you at once. Will you come? He has not long to live; I fear. I have sent a car for you.—Yours sincerely,

F. BAKER.

The car was a two-seater limousine—I think they are called; anyhow the sort that is shut in, the driver as well as the passenger sitting inside. Maude at once jumped to the conclusion that Margery had heard that Jack had been found, and had already gone to him. So she hurried out to the car, got in instead of Margery, and was driven off. Young Rutherford, thinking he might be of assistance, hung on to the step of the car, though in opposition to the driver's wishes. When, however, Rutherford insisted, the driver merely shrugged his shoulders and laughed.

They drove to the junction of the lane with the main road, which is just on the far side of the village. Here they found Baker with two men, waiting with a big closed car. Baker walked up to Maude, who had jumped out, expecting to find Jack in the big car, and began to say something or other in a very soft, soothing voice. He stopped suddenly, looked hard at Maude, rudely flashing a torch in her face, then turned on the driver in a positive fury. Rutherford thought he was about to hit him, and the driver shrank back as though expecting it.

"You cursed fool," said Baker between his teeth, "you've brought the wrong one!"

He stood for an instant, holding his chin and thinking. Then he said:

"Come, get out of that."

The driver shifted across into the passenger's seat, and Baker climbed into the driver's seat.

"Where's Jack, Mr. Baker?" Maude asked.

Baker took no notice of her question.

He put his head out of the window and shouted to the other car. The two men, laughing, tumbled aboard; there was a grinding of gears, and off went the two cars, the two-seater leading, along the London road.

It was then that Rutherford noticed that all the telegraph and telephone wires had been cut and were lying bunched up by the side of the road.

Then only it dawned on him that Baker was one of the murderous gang about whom he had heard from Bates through the doctor. One thing struck him at once. Baker had missed his spring, and had failed to carry off Margery. She was still somewhere in the neighbourhood.

He now told Maude about Bates, and the two of them hurried back to the club—Maude in a condition bordering on frenzy. It makes me laugh when I think of it now; but at the time it was no joke, I tell you. She was furious with Baker, of course, recognising at once that he had deliberately attempted to abduct Margery. But over and above that—well, Maude is a very good-looking woman, prettier, if anything, than Margery; and she is not used to cavalier treatment. And to be brushed contemptuously aside as the "wrong

one"—well, it's enough to make any woman's blood boil.

We left Mrs. Penryhn to look after Maude, and Rutherford and I continued our search. We now had to find Margery as well as Jack; and where to look for them we neither of us had the smallest conception. But I agreed with Rutherford that Baker and his beauties had failed to get hold of Margery. By Jove! it made us savage when we thought that such things could be allowed to happen in this old England of ours.

It was getting light by this time, and Rutherford and I separated so as to cover more ground.

Rutherford went in the direction of the seventh tee, while I went towards the coast. Rutherford thought that at one point he heard a sort of muffled shriek. He was at the time in the gully between the two sandhills in front of the seventh tee. He then remembered that this was the very point at which, according to Maude, the small caddie had heard a shout. Standing in the bottom of the gully, he happened to cast his eyes up to the sandhill on his left. There, silhouetted against the skyline, he caught sight of something moving, something crawling round the shoulder of the hill as if to escape observation. The figure was quite close, only a few yards distant. He sprang after it as it disappeared round the corner, and blundered over a small caddie who was cowering down—literally

grovelling into the sand and grass in the effort to hide himself. The youngster was wet through and scared half out of his wits. Rutherford set him on his feet, soothed him, and asked him what he was doing. The little chap had been out all night in the hope of hearing the shout again and locating it. He had heard the muffled scream, which sounded as if it had come from the gully below him. He had also heard moans. His sharp eyes had spotted Rutherford, but his vivid imagination, excited by the gruesome tales he had heard, had clothed that very personable young man with horns, tails, glowing eyes, canine teeth, and all the other appurtenances of the hobgoblin. Poor little chap! When Rutherford caught him he nearly died of fright. Just think of the pluck this kiddie had displayed in facing these unknown terrors the whole night through! Talk about a hero!

Rutherford praised him up tremendously, told him what a fine, plucky young Englishman he was, and hand-in-hand they two continued the search. Dick Rattray, that was the boy's name, prattled away cheerfully. He explained that his mother was a war widow, very poor, with two small children besides himself to look after, and that he was keen to earn the reward. He had with great difficulty obtained leave from his mother to search all night. He had also, it seems, caddied for Margery in our foursome on Friday afternoon, and she had been

very kind to him, and not at all angry with him when she made a bad shot. He was therefore particularly anxious to find her "young man." That last remark, I fancy, gave poor young Rutherford a nasty jar.

As day slowly dawned, young Rattray lost his terrors, relinquished his protector's hand and went off to search "on his own." Rutherford thinks that he was anxious to show that he was no longer afraid.

As for me, I walked down to the coast to one of the caves from which a stream ran. I remembered that I had mentioned it to Margery; and I thought it possible she had gone there. But I drew blank and so went back with the idea of finding out if by chance she had turned up again at the club house, and, incidentally—I cannot tell a lie—of getting some breakfast.

I was just passing in front of the seventh tee when I heard a woman's screams for help coming from the far side of the sandhill. I thought, as I ran in the direction of the screaming, that it was Baker still at his games; and my fingers tingled to get a grip of him. But as I ran round one side of the sandhill the screams appeared to be going round the other side. So I scrambled to the top of the hill; and there, in the still dim light, I saw a woman running along at the corner of the churchyard wall towards the bunker. She was being chased,

apparently, by a small man or boy who certainly was not Baker. Then I recognised both. It was Margery running away from the caddie. How absurd, I thought; why, she could have eaten two of him!

Then the caddie caught her up and passed on in front of her. I looked to see, as I ran down the steep slope, what it was that was frightening them, but there was nothing. I wasted no more time, but went jumping down the sandhill towards them with flying leaps. Something told me that here was the solution of the mystery. I shouted as I ran, with the idea of reassuring them.

Margery's voice shrilled back at me, "He's here, he's here!" She continued running. So did the boy.

"Where?" I shouted, as I raced towards them.

"In the bunker, here," came the answer.

I altered my course in the direction of the bunker. I overtook and passed Margery.

"Where?" I said.

"He fell through a hole in the bunker," she gasped.

There was the boy speeding along in front of me. I did not stop to ask any more questions, but ran on after the boy. I was close behind him when he jumped down into the bunker. There was the bunker plain to see. There was nothing in it except the boy; there was no hole in it. It was nearly full of sand. But the boy, in a state of desperate excitement, was nosing round under the overhanging bank, scraping the sand away with hands

and feet, burying his arms to their full extent in it, feeling for a hole in the rock. Good boy!—it was young Rattray. So that's where the hole was—close under the bank. I looked for a likely spot, and there was one place where the bank jutted out over the sand. I sprang into the bunker and waded across through the deep sand towards it. But Dick Rattray was before me.

"Look out you don't fall in too," I called out, then jumped for him and got hold of his foot just in the nick of time as he was disappearing head first. As I pulled the youngster out gasping, a great mass of sand fell in disclosing a big hole. The boy was choking, spitting and grinning all at once, while gripping tight hold of the head of a mashie.

"I found it," he gasped, beaming delightedly at Margery.

I caught hold of Margery just in time. She was about to jump down into the hole. She tried to shake me off. "He's dying in there," she exclaimed; "let me go—will you let me go!"

"Margery," I said; "tell me exactly where he is and I'll get him out. If you also are hurt, who is to look after him when he is rescued?" By great luck I had hit on just the argument to appeal to her. She became businesslike and sensible on the instant.

I switched on my torch and directed it down into the hole. The boy peered in under my arm.

Then Margery told me that Jack was in an

underground passage by a crack in the rocks under the churchyard wall, about a hundred yards away from where we were, at the selfsame spot where I had climbed down from the churchyard. I remembered it.

I turned to the boy and said to him; "Now listen to me. You run off to the caddie-master and tell him to come here as quickly as he can and bring a ladder and a coil of rope and a spade or two. Look sharp!"

"Can't I go down into the hole?" asked young Dick.

"Do as I tell you," I thundered; and as he ran off, I shouted after him: "A ladder, rope, spades and—brandy," I added as an afterthought.

"Now you, Margery," I said. "Go back to the crack in the rocks and wait till I get there—cheer up old Jack all you can; and scream to direct me—you understand?"

She went off without a word; and I sent young Rutherford, who had just come up attracted by her screams, to look after her. I was afraid to leave her alone lest Baker should still be about.

I examined the hole again, scraping the sand away from it and tearing away the grass. It was about twelve feet deep. I could see a sharp point of rock, jutting out from the wall at the further side of the cave, and about nine feet down. I am a heavy man and am not too fond of dropping from a height. Could I manage to drop on to that ledge of

rock? But no; it was too far away to the other side of the cave. The bottom of the cave, however, looked like soft sand and I decided to drop on to it.

I put my torch carefully into the side pocket of my coat, lay down on my face with my feet in the hole and lowered myself down carefully.

I took a grip of a small rocky projection with my left hand, and it was lucky that I did so. For the rock had been worn smooth as glass by the constant rubbing of the sand and it sloped steeply down into the hole. I suddenly began to slide, and it was only the grip of my left hand which saved me from a nasty fall. The landing was soft except that my right foot pitched on a piece of hard rock under the sand and gave me a bit of a jar.

This threw me off my balance and I staggered backwards across the cave, the small of my back hitting the sharp rocky projection I have already mentioned. It made me gasp. It struck me that a man pitching forward into this hole unexpectedly would probably half kill himself against this piece of rock. I wondered if that had happened to poor old Jack.

There were two passages leading out of this cave, one to the left, that is, to the east, and one to the right, to the west. The latter was my road. It was about five feet high and varying in breadth from four to six feet. The bottom was soft sand; and there were deep grooves in it as though a narrow

sledge with broad runners had been dragged along it—Jack going along on his hands and knees, to a certainty. So the poor old chap was damaged. I followed these tracks carefully. There was the print of his right hand every here and there where it had not been obliterated by his knees.

Before I had gone far, fifty yards or so, the tunnel bifurcated. Now which road was I to take?

Jack had been heard under the church and under the club house; so one of these went to the church and one to the club house. The right one to the club; the left to the church. Then I must take the left one. Then I thought of Jack's tracks. Which way had he gone? The sand was all blurred and dug up at this point. Jack had evidently passed and repassed it. I studied his tracks carefully. The last one appeared to have gone down the right passage, that is, towards the club. I followed these for a few yards, but felt convinced I was in the wrong passage. It must be the left one which led to the crevice in the rocks.

Well, I would try this left one first, and I had barely started to walk down it, when I heard a shrill cry which, so to speak, hit me in the face. That was Margery. Then came another and another. I shouted in reply, and my bass voice reverberated up and down the passage like a railway train passing over a culvert.

I pushed along now quickly; and with a sinking

heart saw that the passage was blocked. Then I was in the wrong one after all. But as I came close to the block, I saw there was a way round it. There was blood on this rock too. Jack must have hit his head hard against it—poor old boy! I scrambled round the corner and saw a gleam of daylight. I was right then—and I thanked the good God for that.

I trod on a skeleton. For a moment I got a terrible shock—I thought it must be Jack! But on the instant the absurdity of the idea struck me.

Another yard, and another scream from Margery right in my face, told me I had arrived. There was a fissure in the rock wall through which the daylight streamed; and there on the ground at the foot of it lay Jack all huddled up. There was blood all over his face; but the thing that struck me was his open mouth, with his tongue showing. Some of his teeth had been smashed. He was gasping painfully and was insensible.

"Margery," I called. "Margery!"

"Yes," she answered.

"Water is wanted—quick, scream to them to bring water, a bottle of water that you can lower down here on a string——"

"I'll run for it," said Rutherford.

"Wait a minute, Margery," I added. "Wet your handkerchief in the grass or anything and try and throw it down to me."

Then I heard Margery's voice calling out the word

"water." It seemed hours before her voice said, "Here's my handkerchief."

I managed to get my arm into the broadest part of the crevice, working it in to its full extent. Margery had cleverly got hold of a stick and stuck the dripping handkerchief on the end of it. With the utmost care she passed it to me, and with equal caution I took it, brought it out and let it drip into Jack's mouth. Then I squeezed a little more in.

The result was immediate. Jack began to moan. I squeezed more; but the handkerchief was one of those useless little flimsy things that won't absorb more than about half a wine-glassful of liquid. I squeezed it hard to get the very last drop out of it. Then I called "Margery, another handkerchief, or a piece of your dress or anything—something that will hold water."

"I've got it here, waiting," said Margery.

I reached up again, and took from the end of the stick a large piece of linen, dripping wet. This was better. I let it drip steadily into Jack's mouth. Presently the horrid glassy stare in his eye—one of them was swollen and closed up—gave way to a look of dawning intelligence. Jack was trying to speak. I bent down to listen.

By Jove! he was muttering a girl's name—and it wasn't Margery. So all poor Maude's match-making had come to naught. And poor Margery—after all this too——

I felt very sad about it—Margery was such a topping good girl. Still there it was. A man in his condition, practically at the last gasp, does not mutter a woman's name unless he is very fond of her. And Jack had no sister.

Then I heard a clinking noise above me; and Margery's voice said, "Here's a bottle of water." I got up and took the bottle without a word. Poor girl!

"I'm coming down now," she said. I began to protest; but changed my mind. It was better that she should hear for herself—she would not then give herself away. I gave her instructions as to the road to take and warned her of the depth of the hole and on no account to jump down. I uncorked the bottle, got Jack's head up on my arm, and poured a little water into his mouth. He sighed and half shut his eye. I began to be afraid he was dying and felt to see if his heart was beating. I could feel nothing. I was afraid to give him too much water at first; but I wet Margery's handkerchief and wiped his face with it. The poor old chap had been through a cruel time. His right hand was raw and bleeding; his left was swollen double the proper size, while the knuckles and wrist were gashed to the bone. The knees of his knickerbockers were worn to shreds and his knees were also cut and bleeding His clothes, especially his breeches and stockings, were filthy, covered with a disgusting slime. The boot was off his left foot,

and the stocking was as tight as a drum over the ankle. I touched it and found the ankle and foot badly swollen. So I got out my knife and ripped up the stocking, thinking it might, perhaps, ease him. I then gave him a little more water; and at the same moment I heard some one come round the corner of the passage.

"Here they are," said the childish treble of Dick Rattray, as he appeared round the corner, carrying a lantern. Close behind him came Margery, followed by Rutherford. She literally pushed me away, flung herself down beside Jack and took his head in her arms.

Jack opened his eye. "Violet," he whispered.

Then Margery did a most extraordinary thing. She looked up at me with that defiant expression which she and Maude put on when they mean to do something outrageous, then deliberately bent down and kissed him. It was hardly what I should have expected of her; for she must have heard quite clearly the name he mentioned. There were the caddie-master and professional looking on too. What did she want to give herself away for like that?

"Come along," I said rather roughly, "we must get him away out of this."

The caddie-master had very sensibly brought a blanket, and on this we laid Jack. Then the caddie-master and the "pro." each took one corner, while Rutherford and I took the other two corners

at Jack's head. Very slowly and carefully, young Dick lighting the road in front with the lantern and Margery bringing up the rear with the torch, we carried him down the passage into the bunker hole. It was a difficult business getting him round the angle at the block in the passage; otherwise it was comparatively easy going. But we had the deuce of a job to get him up the ladder into the bunker. He is a heavyish man; and I was thankful when we had accomplished it. There we found half the village collected, and the doctor had also arrived. He administered restoratives and examined Jack's head—the only thing that appeared to interest him for the moment. The arm and leg could wait, he said.

At the time, of course, we none of us knew that he had been shot in the leg. We carried Jack to the club house and put him to bed in Mrs. Penryhn's room, where the doctor took him in hand with Maude acting as nurse. That marvel, Mrs. Penryhn, produced an excellent breakfast for Margery and me, to which we both did full justice. Rutherford preferred to go back to the hotel. The poor boy was hard hit; but Margery was very nice to him. I was astonished to see Margery display such a healthy appetite. I had always understood that unrequited love put one off one's feed. I began to think that she was not in love with Jack after all, and that the kiss was mere

womanly sympathy. Oh! but I remembered her face when Jack was first lost, and the tears streaming down it, and the way in which she had tried to jump down into the bunker hole, when it might have been the mouth of hell for all she knew to the contrary. A woman doesn't do that sort of thing for a man for whom she feels womanly sympathy only.

She kept her eyes on her plate most of the time; but once when she looked up and met my glance, she blushed vividly. I was greatly astonished: not at the blush, that was but natural, but at the look of extreme happiness—beatitude is the only word for it—on her face. Considering everything, that was, I thought, rather out of place. A bright thought struck me, however. Perhaps "Violet" was Jack's pet name for her. Of course, that would be it. I thought I would find out judiciously, and asked her, accordingly, if she had ever had a pet name besides "Marge" or "Margerine." She said she had not; but bent down over her plate trying, apparently, to hide her face. But I saw her lips twitch as if she was restraining a smile. Now, what on earth was there to laugh at, I ask you?

Well, I gave it up; it beat me. I never could understand women, and I am no nearer to it even now, though I have been married for over a year.

CHAPTER XII

JOHN SAUNDERSON'S NARRATIVE

I MUST tell you how Bates managed to escape from the mine workings.

You will remember that he had left the miners to force their way out of the mine and had turned down one of the side passages on the upper level to look for Jack—for "the orficer," as he expressed it. How he and Jack missed each other I cannot quite make out. Bates went straight to the cubby-hole expecting to find Jack there. Here he found the man in the Homburg hat lying apparently dead, and he thought that it must have been Jack's handiwork. He next went to the cave at the coast and drew blank; then back to the chamber on the lower level at the head of the tunnel. Here he found another dead "Shinn" and Jim Morgan, the miner, who was gibbering with terror and from whom he could elicit nothing. Then he went to the cross-passages and here he met Baker (with about six men), who was hunting Jack.

He blundered bang in amongst them, fought

his way out, turned and ran for it. He was shot as he bolted—hit in the back. The expanding bullet broke up against one of his ribs, the splinters for the most part fortunately flying outwards instead of inwards, though one penetrated his lung. It was a nasty wound which would have brought down any man but Bates. He, however, made good his escape into the main tunnel, ran down it, and following Jack's instructions searched for, found and turned up the bunker passage with the idea of joining Jack in the bunker cavern. Bates had no watch; but so far as I can make out, he must have entered the bunker passage about one o'clock on Sunday afternoon. At that time Jack must have been lying asleep in the bunker cavern.

Bates worked up the passage, passing through the cavern of the fairy voices, thence to the cavern with the trickle of water flowing down the wall. He carried straight on towards the bunker, but coming to the side passage down which the strong draught was blowing he took it, for the road to the bunker was silted up, and he never noticed it at all.

As luck would have it, it led him into the open, though he had a cruel hard struggle to get through the sand. He forced his way along this passage for about three hundred yards, coming, finally, to a small hole in the rocks down which the sand was blowing in great quantities, and through which he managed to get out though only with considerable difficulty.

Having found his way out, and recognising that he had missed the road to the rendezvous that Jack had given him, he deliberately, notwithstanding his wound, turned back into the passage to find Jack and bring him out. He worked right through again at the risk of being buried alive in the sand, and arrived at the junction with the bunker passage at the point where Jack had fought his way through the whirlpool of sand. But there was no such whirlpool now. The bunker passage was closed up and Bates again passed it without knowing of its existence. He reached the cavern of the fairy voices only to run into Baker and his crew once more.

Baker, so far as I can figure it out, though this is mere speculation, must have thought that he had both Jack and Bates in front of him. He spotted Bates and shot at him. There was nothing for the latter to do but to bolt again. He was hit, but this time very slightly, the bullet grazing his leg.

Through the passage he went for the third time, his pursuers close on his heels. But he outdistanced them, escaping again through the rocks, and lay hidden in the long grass and watched.

Presently Baker wormed his way out, followed by three men. They stood there brushing the sand off each other and talking; but Bates could not hear what they said. Then the three men went off in the direction of the village while Baker walked north, that is, towards the club house.

It was, as I gather, about five o'clock ; and an hour later we met Baker at the club. You will remember that he had said that he was anxious to fix up a game with Jack. He really wished to ascertain if Jack had escaped and given the alarm.

In the meantime, the moment Baker and his crew had disappeared, back went Bates into the passage to search for Jack and the bunker cavern. He made his way right back to the main tunnel and the cubby-hole, searching everywhere for Jack ; but the only person he found was Jim Morgan who fled from him, screaming.

Just think of it. Bates had no light except a few matches ; he was shockingly, badly wounded ; and the passage to the open was silting up every minute.

Imagine the indomitable courage, energy and loyalty he displayed.

It was ten o'clock before he finally relinquished his search for Jack.

His idea now was to find me. He thought that Jack might have escaped by this same passage. If not, then he had either been caught and killed or he was still lurking in the mine workings. The best thing he could do was to find me and rouse the neighbourhood against the revolutionaries. If Jack was still in the mine workings that was the only chance.

He was nearly at the end of his tether. He got out of the hole in the rocks, made his way to a farm track, roused out a farm hand and was directed to

the hotel which, fortunately, is the only one in the neighbourhood. It is characteristic of Bates that he said nothing to the farm hand of the revolutionaries or of his wound, but started off to find me. How he managed to cover the two miles and to find his way with the wound in his back, beats me entirely. The doctor says that it was only sheer dogged pluck that carried him through. I take off my hat to him as a very gallant gentleman.

In the meantime Baker and his gang must have concluded that Bates certainly, probably Jack as well, had escaped them. They had no time to lose. The game was up. They would have the police and perhaps the military from Plymouth down on them in no time. They had already, it seems, taken away most of the weapons; and there could be no object in running unnecessary risk.

So they put into execution the plans which had evidently already been drawn up to make their escape. It is only necessary to recall Baker's cool attempt to abduct Margery, and the effective manner in which they cut the telegraph and telephone wires, to recognise that they must have had everything cut and dried for a midnight flitting.

Baker and most of his gang got clean away for the time being. The village policeman tried both the telegraph and telephone, but, of course, without effect because the wires had been cut. They had even cut the railway signal wires. When at last

the news got through and the police throughout Cornwall and Devonshire were warned, the chars-à-bancs and cars had vanished. They were traced as far as Launceston ; but at that place they appear to have separated. One char-à-banc, travelling north of Exmoor, came to grief down the hill from Lynton into Lynmouth, and its passengers, numbering two, were caught, together with about half a dozen cases of pistols. The men were locked up ; but three nights later there was a raid by armed men on the jail and the prisoners were carried away in motor cars. At least that was the rumour that was flying around ; but, as you will remember, the whole affair was more or less hushed up, because just at that time the Government, so I was told, wished to allay public excitement.

Margery, who is a photographic enthusiast, had snapshotted Baker one day without his knowledge when he was playing golf. It was rather interesting. Two London detectives, Foreign Office men as I believe, had come down and were interviewing us all in the hotel. Jack and I, with these two, were in Bates' room, that is, in the room that had been young Rutherford's and where Bates was still lying in bed. We had each in turn tried to describe Baker, who was certainly the moving spirit of the whole business and far the biggest scoundrel of them all. But it is extraordinary how our descriptions varied. Were his eyes black, or brown, or

blue, or green, or grey? Hanged if any of us knew. You want a woman to notice things like that; so we got Margery to come in. She said at once that one eye was green and one was brown. This appeared to excite one of the detectives.

"But," said Margery, "I have a photograph of him. I sent the film to be developed and it has just come back."

The detectives were delighted. Margery went and fetched it.

"It's him right enough!" exclaimed one of them. "I thought so," he added.

They would not say any more just then; but later one of them told me that Baker was a well-known professional revolutionary. The man in the Homburg hat was another.

I asked him what the devil he meant; did he mean an anarchist?

Oh, no, was the reply; he was not an anarchist; he was simply a man who had made it his business in life to work up revolutions for the "pickings" he could make out of them. There were numbers of such men about, though Baker was one of the most dangerous of all of them. That, of course, was not his real name. As a matter of fact, he had half a dozen names, and he changed them whenever it suited his convenience. This Foreign Office man reminded me of the revolutions which were of such common occurrence in Central and South American

States many years ago. Well, when a man, or a body of men, wished to oust the Government of one of these States and step into their shoes, they sent for a professional revolutionary and made their terms with him—so much down; and so much more in the event of success. Then this revolutionary, much like the mercenary leaders of the Middle Ages, set up his standard, so to speak, though he did it quietly; that is, he approached other professional revolutionaries who were accustomed to work with him and who could be relied on to bring together the necessary numbers of men, chiefly cut-throats, to execute the *coup d'état*. Of late years, however, the American States, with perhaps the exception of Mexico, had made their countries too hot for these beauties. They had adopted very short, sharp and decisive methods with them. These revolutionaries, accordingly, found fresh fields and pastures new in Russia. But that vein had been more or less worked out.

"So now——"

He stopped—thinking over his mixed metaphors, perhaps.

"They've come to Ireland?" I prompted.

"And to England," he added.

"Bates seemed to think they were Sinn Feiners—is that true?" I asked.

"They're posing as Sinn Feiners," he replied; "there may be one or two genuine 'Shinners'

amongst them; but their idea is to use the Irish movement as a safeguard—noble political ideal—that sort of thing."

"Will you ever catch 'em?" I asked.

"Even if we did we couldn't punish them according to their deserts—not in this country at least," he added, thoughtfully.

"Why not?" I asked.

But I could get nothing more out of him at the time.

Some months later, however, I had the luck to run up against him in Piccadilly, and gave him dinner at my club.

We have some topping old port—real good stuff—and, after dinner, I simply ladled it into him, hoping to make him talk. The confounded fellow spotted my game at once, I think; he lapped down the port, cocking his eye at me from time to time, but changing the conversation whenever I tried to bring it round to Baker and his gang.

Finally, out of pity, or because he saw that I was not the sort of fellow who would repeat things, he told me all about it.

The cavern down in Cornwall had been a petrol depôt for Bosche submarines during the war. It was known that one existed somewhere at the mouth of the Bristol Channel; but it was believed to be on the Welsh Coast, every inch of which had been searched—without result, of course. The Bosches had, apparently, brought the automatic

pistols into it with a view to arming revolutionaries when the expected uprising in England should occur. They divulged, presumably, the existence of these weapons to the Bolshevists at the end of the war. Anyhow, it was in Russia that Baker ultimately got to know of them.

Now, Baker and the man in the Homburg hat and some others of the gang had taken part in the rebellion in Ireland in 1916, though none of them were Irish.

"But Baker himself told me," I said, "that he was an Irishman."

"Oh, yes," was the reply, "he's an Irishman in Ireland or England, a Mexican in Mexico, a Russian in Russia—a 'patriot' at all times and in all places. In reality he's a pure-bred mongrel with a dash of Jewish and, I think, black blood in his veins."

Well, it seems that at the end of the war, Baker and his beauties were Bolshevists in Russia. From Russia they made their way to the United States where they enjoyed themselves on the proceeds of the jewellery they had picked up in Russia. From the United States they had been traced to Mexico where they had disappeared. They were next heard of in Ireland. There they stayed but a short time.

The succession of great strikes in England and Scotland gave them a fresh opportunity of which they were not slow to avail themselves. They had

been in Glasgow and South Wales working up revolution and helping to organise a "Red Army." Then down they came to Cornwall with a body of miner recruits to collect the pistols. These they took away and hid in various scattered positions in South Wales, where they were now being unearthed, gradually, by the police. They managed to organise a great revolutionary meeting in South Wales, in the summer of 1921, which was, however, broken up by ex-service men.

Thereafter they were hunted high and low, but managed to escape back to Ireland.

My detective stopped and rubbed his hands, a genial smile of satisfaction on his face.

"Well," I asked, "what then?"

"Oh, then," he replied, "they fell foul of Sinn Fein—but it's high time for me to be going," he added, rising briskly.

"But—but look here, tell me what happened," I exclaimed, as we went to fetch our hats and coats.

"I don't know—I don't know for certain," he replied; "but I don't think Baker or his gang will ever give us any further trouble."

Well, as I have told you, I don't like Sinn Fein methods; but, upon my word, they appear to have done us a good turn in this particular instance.

Baker and his gang had also unwittingly done us all a good turn.

The miner recruits were all arrested in the first

instance; but, in accordance with the policy of hushing up the whole business, were sent back to their homes and released. These men had had enough of revolution. They had learnt that whoever might stand to gain by it, they, the rank and file, would be worse off than ever they had been in their lives before—that, indeed, few of them would live to see the end of it.

The police, reinforced by a platoon of infantry from Plymouth, had taken charge of the mine head and workings and the latter were, so far as possible, thoroughly examined.

I happened to know the man in command, and was therefore able to help in exploring the passages. I have drawn a rough sketch of them, or rather of those we examined, and in which these events occurred. But there were numerous other passages, many of which had fallen in, been blocked with sand or flooded. And there was a lower level of workings which we made no attempt to enter. A spell of easterly winds cleared the sand out of the tunnels as far east as the cavern of the "Fairy Voices"; but it took us all our time to get on down to the coast cavern by this route.

A cross-passage which joined the church and the club house was a poisonous place. At one point the walls were very damp, covered with a thick sort of moss, and simply infested with slugs. They were there in thousands, a regular colony of them. Some

of these were enormous, about six inches long when extended. This accounted for the slime on Jack's clothes. The poor beggar, half dead with exhaustion, must have been through this hideous place.

We could not, for a long time, discover the outlet from the cavern by the sea. We easily located the cave from the outside by the stream which issued from it; but we could find no entrance into the cavern. Finally, we discovered it by sheer luck. Young Rutherford leant against a big rock while lighting his pipe, and was astonished to find that it moved slightly. It was, in fact, neatly balanced on another rock—on the same principle as the logan-rock, I think they call it, near St. Ives—and with a little effort we found it turned round as if on a swivel. There was the cavern straight in front of our noses. If Jack had pushed the end of the rock which was, apparently, part of the wall, instead of the other end, he would have got out. But it would never enter anybody's head that this great mass of rock would turn in such a fashion. It is a most extraordinary thing, due, I am informed, to untold centuries of washing by the stream, which has eaten away the soft rock and left a hard pinnacle on which the door revolves.

The authorities are considering the desirability of sealing up these workings and especially the coast cavern; but the local inhabitants are stoutly opposed to the idea as it would deprive them of a

feature of great interest and profit. A company is, indeed, being formed to exploit them, in which I intend to take shares. We shall light up the passages with electric light and charge a shilling for entrance. We calculate that there is big money in it, but it will ruin the links. There is already violent altercation on the subject of the hole in the churchyard bunker. The club desires to brick it up, whereas the local authorities wish to open it and build a staircase down it, with turnstiles and a man in a gold-braided hat—Bates for choice—to dish out the tickets.

The cavern of the "Fairy Voices" is expected to be a great draw. These voices have not been explained, though I suppose they are merely the noise of the burn intensified by the rock walls and confined space. They are extraordinarily lifelike, and one could swear that they are women talking. But in spite of all our efforts we cannot penetrate into the passage down which this little burn flows. All one can do is to peer into it from the cavern of the "Fairy Voices" and admire the beauty of the home that the "blood council" has chosen for its habitation. It is just as well, perhaps, for the deeper the mystery attached to it, the more shillings we shall collect. There is a great clump of black rocks on the surface of the ground immediately above, so far as we can judge, the home of the fairies; and, on a still evening, if you lie

down in amongst these rocks, you can distinctly hear the voices, as well as the "weary wailing." The latter, indeed, is much louder up above than it is down in the cavern, and was probably the first thing to attract attention to the "blood council."

Jack's golf ball, with the message tied on to it, was only found about a month after these events occurred. It was right out, clear of the bunker, and buried in long grass. The local committee concerned with exploiting the passages and caverns have offered him five pounds for it. They wish to put it in a glass case in the bunker hole with a description of his adventures underneath it. But Jack won't part with it—foolishly, as I say; for he could always get another ball of the same sort for three shillings and write the message over again for nothing. But Margery backs him up, so there's no more to be said.

For four days Jack lay at the club house semi-conscious, babbling of sand, petrol, Bates and Baker, of Homburg hats and devils, of Margery and Violet.

I rather wondered at Jack. He is not the sort of man to have two or three loves simultaneously.

The doctor said he had concussion, aggravated by exhaustion and loss of blood. The wound in his thigh would soon heal, with care and attention, though one small splinter of the bullet had penetrated rather deeply. He had, however, a good constitution, which, aided by good nursing, would soon pull

him round. Maude and Margery insisted on nursing him.

I must say the members of the club were very good about it all. Here was their club turned into a hospital with the usual nasty smells which penetrated everywhere. On the Monday afternoon four fellows started to play bridge and they had some joke which made them laugh. The door opened and Margery appeared. "Would you please be very quiet," she said in a cold, incisive voice. After that you might have heard a pin drop. "Who is she?" they whispered to each other; and one after the other they crept out of the club on the tips of their toes. I saw Sir Charles, seated in his chair, chuckling quietly. He is a quaint old bird.

The trouble between Jack and Margery has been cleared up satisfactorily I am glad to say. I found the story out by degrees, chiefly from Maude; and it is interesting from a scientific point of view. I don't, personally, myself, believe in these occult things, telepathy and so on. Still I admit it is rather queer, the more so as I myself had climbed down within a yard of Jack and never discovered him, while Margery at the club house found him, so she affirms, in her sleep. Jack says that the question, "Jack where are you?" hammered insistently on his brain when he was crawling through the tunnels and even when he was lying asleep or insensible. Margery says that she, asleep

in the club house, kept asking the same question to herself in her dreams. She thought she was no longer Margery, but a disembodied spirit; and that she had floated away up into the sky to a tremendous height. No, she was not in an aeroplane; she was just floating in space. The world was below her about the size of a marble, spinning round very quickly. She wondered if it really were the world; and it conveniently enlarged itself so that she might make certain. She was looking down on the North Pole, which was, however, at an angle to her line of vision—quite as it should be, in fact—a bit slewed to one side; and as it spun round on its axis, she saw Norway and Sweden and Britain just disappearing. Then the north of Russia came into view and Siberia; she recognised the Behring Straits, Alaska, the top of North America and Canada. Then Greenland came along and Iceland; and she became quite excited because Great Britain began to appear and she wondered whether she would see Jack. I pointed out to Maude, who told me this, that the world was turning round the wrong way; but she brushed that aside as of no importance. Sure enough she, Margery, did see Jack. He was much closer to her than was the world; he also seemed to be floating in the air; but he was shut up in what she at first took to be a sort of a box, a coffin, she thought. It roused no sort of emotion in her. Of course he would be in a

coffin ; he was just dead ; she also was dead ; and presently he would join her. Then she saw that it was not a coffin ; but that he was in a rocky tunnel, with a big crack in it. She recognised the place at once ; and to make certain she looked to see if violets were growing there. Yes, there they were. And the question which her brain had been asking, " Jack where are you ? " stopped ; and the answer came, " Where you found the violets." This answer kept repeating itself ; and she woke up suddenly with it ringing in her brain. She got up without waking Maude, crept out of the club house, and walked straight across to the crevice in the rocks below the churchyard wall. It was a great stroke of luck, for otherwise she would have received Baker's message, gone off to him and been carried away. When quite close to the crevice she met Dick Rattray, who was nosing about. It was half-past five, and just getting light.

Well, young Dick told me that Margery said to him in the most matter-of-fact way, " He's in the rocks here where I found those violets. Come and help me get him out."

As far as I can gather she must still have been half asleep, imagining that both Jack and she were spirits and that it would be quite easy for either of them to get through the three-inch crevice.

Margery and young Rattray came to the fissure in the rocks, and Dick climbed up to the point, a

few feet above the ground, where it was widest. He stuck his head in as far as it would go and listened. Then he heard a moan, which I have no doubt made his hair stand on end. But the plucky little chap stood his ground and to make certain asked if anyone was there. For answer he heard a distinct moan and something inside which he could just see, or thought he could see—a heap of something—moved. He scrambled down hastily, told Margery, and she climbed up in his place. She heard moaning too. Then she called, "Jack, is that you?" There was no answer at first except moans; but, presently, her voice seemed to awaken Jack and he asked if it was Margery. His voice was the merest whisper. Fortunately the morning was dead calm, or she could never have heard what he said. She told him yes, and asked him very distinctly how he had fallen in there. Ultimately she got the answer out of the poor old chap, who was more dead than alive; and she worried at him till she found out about the hole under the bank of the churchyard bunker. Once she had got that, she chucked all restraint, scrambled down, and commenced screaming, "Help! help!" She continued screaming as she ran, to attract attention. The boy was flabbergasted for a minute, uncertain what to do; then he gave chase; and as he passed her she told him of the hole under the bank. He raced on in front to be—in at the death, I had almost

said—well, thank the Lord it wasn't; but it very nearly was. If Margery had not been able to get an answer out of Jack we should never have managed to extricate him in time, for he was encased in practically solid rock which could have been shifted by blasting only. And I doubt whether anybody but Margery could have brought him back to life sufficiently to reply to her questions. For it seems it's quite true that he is in love with her: they are to be married in a month or so, though how she knew it when he had never told her—hardly knew it himself, in fact—is beyond my comprehension. I have asked Maude; but all the help she gives is to laugh and call me "a silly old stupid."

Well, you are as well able to judge of the value of this from a scientific point of view as I am. The extraordinary thing is that Margery dreamt where he was, and half-asleep, went straight to the place; whereas I, with all my wits about me, climbed down within a yard of him and had not the foggiest notion that he was near me. As I say, it beats me.

Jack is not too keen to talk about it; but I tell him and Margery that they really must write down their experiences as they may be of great value to science. Margery, however, flatly refuses.

Sir Charles also urges them to do so. He says it is an illustration of the seventh sense which has become atrophied through disuse in most of us, and which can now be utilised only by persons labouring

under great emotion. He says that savage races possess this sense in a marked degree, and that it accounts for the speed with which news can travel—beating the telegraph—in wild uncivilised countries. He says they are thought-waves—telepathy—and that they require a certain length of time to travel a certain distance. They do not just flash from one point to another. He instances the well-known fact that one suddenly begins to think of a person of whom one has not thought for months past; and sure enough the very next morning a letter arrives from that very person. Yet you do not begin to think of them when they are actually writing the letter and therefore thinking of you, but some hours later. That proves, he says, that these thought-waves travel at a certain rate of speed.

Well, one never knows; there may be something in it. I can only hope there is. We may yet be able to harness these thought-waves, communicate freely with one another at a distance, and so avoid the exorbitant delays and charges of the telephone.

You should have seen young Dick Rattray's face and that of his mother when, before all the caddies, I presented him with the promised reward of five pounds. He is as fine a youngster as ever stepped, and Jack and I mean to get him into the Navy if we possibly can and if his mother is willing.

Mrs. Penryhn beams at us whenever she sees any of us; and when I have lunch or tea at the club, she

so stuffs me with good things that I have to set out to walk it off at once. She will simply poison Jack when he is well enough to eat anything besides flapdoodle.

We have very interesting discussions over the psychological problem with Sir Charles, who has become a very great friend of ours.

For instance, we were all sitting talking one day and I had been worrying Jack to write his experiences. Then I chaffed him about Violet. To my profound astonishment Margery flashed up angrily. I've forgotten what she said exactly, but it was something quite vicious.

Then she rose and went out of the room. Maude hesitated, then followed her. I was flabbergasted, for I would not for worlds hurt Margery's feelings.

I was inclined to grumble, saying that I couldn't for the life of me understand women.

"My dear fellow," said Sir Charles, "you forgot to take off your boots." I stared at him.

Then he went on: "Understand women? How can you expect to? Why, they won't eat oysters and they hold their noses when they drink old brandy—understand women indeed! You young fellows expect to understand the universe."

Of course I understood the allusion to the oysters and old brandy, for Maude and Margery wanted to have some oysters I bought *cooked*; while when Maude caught a chill and was made to drink some

brandy—jolly good stuff it was too—she held her nose as if it were medicine, and eat a peppermint or chocolate, or something afterwards to take the taste away! But I couldn't see what boots had got to do with it.

I suppose Sir Charles was rotting, because his eyes twinkled. Jack laughed too; but I'll be bound he did not know what he was laughing at.

Sir Charles would by no means admit that our explorations had proved that there was no diabolical genius of the buried village, but he hoped that the rescue of Jack had put a termination to its evil activities. I, of course, pooh-poohed the idea. But he pointed to the following: Jack was the seventh man who had so unaccountably disappeared in this neighbourhood; it was seven years since the last man had disappeared; that man had disappeared on the seventh of March; Jack had disappeared on the seventh of April; he had fallen into the bunker of the seventh hole. He was rescued by the exercise of the seventh sense. The seventh wave, as is well known, is an extra big one; the seventh child of a seventh child is always something remarkable. How could I account for these facts?

Well, of course, I couldn't. But I told him that I had often counted the waves, to see if the seventh wave was really bigger than the rest; and it was not. At least, it is impossible to count waves, for

very often two or even three merge into one another ; and you can count them as one, two or three, whichever you please.

Also, I said, if this theory were correct Jack ought to have fallen into the hole at seven o'clock in the morning or seven o'clock in the evening ; and he did not.

But he was brought out at seven o'clock in the morning, Sir Charles pointed out triumphantly.

Yes, that is true enough ; it was just seven o'clock when we got him out ; I remember the church clock striking. Still, the church clock is always wrong, always fast or slow, by Greenwich time, that is.

But Sir Charles wagged his head at me as he left, punctually at seven o'clock (not Greenwich time).

He turned at the door of the smoking-room and looked at me from under his bushy eyebrows.

" I have lived long," he said, " I am an old man ; when you have lived as long as I have "—he pointed a long, bony finger at me which made my flesh creep—" you will learn that there are more things in Heaven and Earth——"

With that, he was gone.

THE END.

Cahill & Co., Ltd., Drogheda, Ireland.

00101204

~~KX R 239~~
the Haunted seventh
God 823
Ros/Hau
B 354 25/4
SG Mandir 3/9/00

Digitized with financial assistance from

HT Parekh FOUNDATION

An Initiative by HDFC WITH YOU, RIGHT THROUGH

on 15 October, 2018